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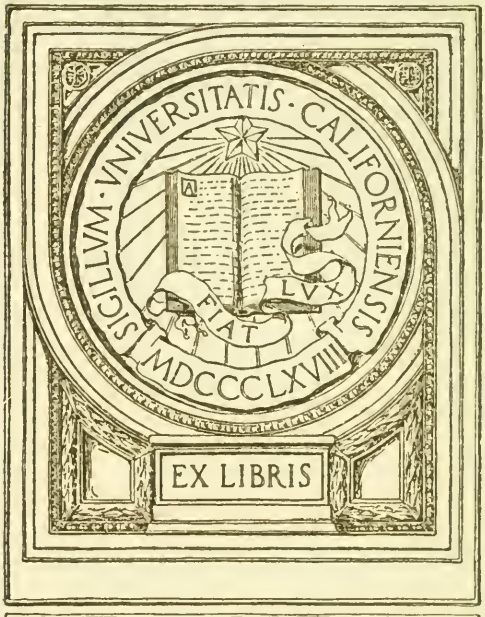

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Agincourt

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THE WORKS

OF

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

" D'autres auteurs l'ont encore plus avili, (le roman,) en y mêlant les tableaux dégoutant du vice ; et tandis que le premier avantage des fictions est de rassembler autour de l'homme tout ce qui, dans la nature, peut lui servir de leçon ou de modèle, on a imaginé qu'on tirerait une utilité quelconque des peintures odieuses de mauvaises mœurs ; comme si elles pouvaient jamais laisser le cœur qui les repousse, dans une situation aussi pure que le cœur qui les aurait toujours ignorées. Mais un roman tel qu'on peut le concevoir, tel que nous en avons quelques modèles, est une des plus belles productions de l'esprit humain, une des plus influentes sur la morale des individus, qui doit former ensuite les mœurs publiques."—MADAME DE STAEL. *Essai sur les Fictions.*

" Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda :
Forse diretro a me, con miglior voci
Si pregherà, perchè Cirra risponda."
DANTE. *Paradiso*, Canto I.

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AGINCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

THE NIGHT RIDE.

The night was as black as ink; not a solitary twinkling star looked out through that wide expanse of shadow, which our great Poet has called the "blanket of the dark;" clouds covered the heaven; the moon had not risen to tinge them even with grey, and the sun had too long set to leave one faint streak of purple upon the edge of the western sky. Trees, houses, villages, fields, and gardens, all lay in one profound obscurity, and even the course of the high-road itself required eyes well-accustomed to night-travelling to be able to distinguish it, as it wandered on through a rich part of Hampshire, amidst alternate woods and meadows. Yet at that murky hour, a traveller on horseback rode forward upon his way, at an easy pace, and with a light heart, if one might judge by the snatches of homely ballads that broke from his lips as he trotted on. These might, indeed, afford a fallacious indication of what was going on within the breast, and in his case they did so; for habit is more our master than we know, and often rules our external demeanour, whenever the spirit is called to take council in the deep chambers within, showing upon the surface, without any effort on our part to hide our thoughts, a very different aspect from that of the mind's business at the moment.

Thus, then, the traveller who there rode along, saluting the ear of night with scraps of old songs, sung in a low, but melodious voice, was as thougthful, if not as sad, as it was

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in his nature to be; but yet, as that nature was a cheerful one and all his habits were gay, no sooner were the eyes of the spirit called to the consideration of deeper things, than custom exercised her sway over the animal part, and he gave voice, as we have said, to the old ballads which had cheered his boyhood and his youth.

Whatever were his contemplations, they were interrupted, just as he came to a small stream which crossed the road and then wandered along at its side, by first hearing the quick foot-falls of a horse approaching, and then a loud, but fine voice, exclaiming, "Who goes there?"

"A friend to all true men," replied the traveller; "a foe to all false knaves. 'Merry sings the throstle under the thorn.' Which be you, friend of the highway?"

"Faith, I hardly know," replied the stranger; "every man is a bit of both, I believe. But if you can tell me my way to Winchester, I will give you thanks."

"I want nothing more," answered the first traveller, drawing in his rein. "But Winchester!—Good faith, that is a long way off; and you are going from it, master:" and he endeavoured, as far as the darkness would permit, to gain some knowledge of the stranger's appearance. It seemed that of a young man of good proportions, tall and slim, but with broad shoulders and long arms. He wore no cloak, and his dress fitting tight to his body, as was the fashion of the day, allowed his interlocutor to perceive the unencumbered outline of his figure.

"A long way off!" said the second traveller, as his new acquaintance gazed at him; "that is very unlucky; but all my stars are under that black cloud. What is to be done now, I wonder?"

"What do you want to do?" inquired the first traveller. "Winchester is distant five and twenty miles or more."

"Odds life! I want to find somewhere to lodge me and my horse for a night," replied the other, "at a less distance than twenty-five miles, and yet not quite upon this very spot."

"Why not Andover?" asked his companion; "'tis but six miles, and I am going thither."

"Humph!" said the stranger, in a tone not quite satisfied; "it must be so, if better cannot be found; and yet, my friend, I would fain find some other lodging. Is there no inn hard by, where carriers bait their beasts and fill their bellies, and country-folks carouse on nights of merry-making?

or some old hall or goodly castle, where a truckle bed, or one of straw, a nunchion of bread and cheese, and a draught of ale, is not likely to be refused to a traveller with a good coat on his back and long-toed shoes?"

"Oh, ay!" rejoined the first; "of the latter there are many round, but, on my life, it will be difficult to direct you to them. The men of this part have a fondness for crooked ways, and, unless you were the Dædalus who made them, or had some fair dame to guide you by the clue, you might wander about for as many hours as would take you to Winchester."

"Then Andover it must be, I suppose," answered the other; "though, to say sooth, I may there have to pay for a frolic, the score of which might better be reckoned with other men than myself."

"A frolic!" said his companion; "nothing more, my friend?"

"No, on my life!" replied the other; "a scurvy frolic, such as only a fool would commit; but when a man has nothing else to do, he is sure to fall into folly, and I am idle perforce."

"Well, I 'll believe you," answered the first, after a moment's thought; "I have, thank Heaven, the gift of credulity, and believe all that men tell me. Come, I will turn back with you, and guide you to a place of rest, though I shall be well laughed at for my pains."

"Not for an act of generous courtesy, surely," said the stranger, quitting the half-jesting tone in which he had hitherto spoken. "If they laugh at you for that, I care not to lodge with them, and will not put your kindness to the test, for I should look for a cold reception."

"Nay, nay, 'tis not for that, they will laugh," rejoined the other, "and perhaps it may jump with my humour to go back, too. If you have committed a folly in a frolic to-night, I have committed one in anger. Come with me, therefore, and, as we go, give me some name by which to call you when we arrive, that I may not have to throw you into my uncle's hall as a keeper with a dead deer; and, moreover, before we go, give me your word that we have no frolics here, for I would not, for much, that any one I brought, should move the old knight's heart with aught but pleasure."

"There is my hand, good youth," replied the stranger, following, as the other turned his horse; "and I never break my word, whatever men say of me, though they tell strange

tales. As for my name, people call me Hal of Hadnock; it will do as well as another."

"For the nonce," added his companion, understanding well that it was assumed; "but it matters not. Let us ride on, and the gate shall soon be opened to you; for I do think they will be glad to see me back again, though I may not perchance stay long.

> 'The porter rose anon certaine
> As soon as he heard John call.'"

"You seem learned for a countryman," said the traveller, riding on by his side; "but, perchance, I am speaking to a clerk?"

"Good faith, no," replied the first wayfarer; "more soldier than clerk, Hal of Hadnock; as old Robert of Langland says, 'I cannot perfectly my Paternoster, as the priest it singeth, but I can rhyme of Robin Hode and Randof Earl of Chester.' I have cheered my boyhood with many a song and my youth with many a ballad. When lying in the field upon the marches of Wales, I have wiled away many a cold night with the—

> 'Quens Mountfort, sa dure mort,'

or,

> 'Richard of Alemaigne, while he was king,'

and then in the cold blasts of March, I ever found comfort in—

> 'Summer is icumen in,
> Lhude sing cuccu,
> Groweth sede and bloweth mede,
> And springeth the wode nu.'"

"And good reason, too," said Hal of Hadnock; "I do the same, i'faith; and when wintry winds are blowing, I think ever, that a warmer day may come and all be bright again. Were it not for that, indeed, I might well be cold-hearted."

"Fie, never flinch!" cried his gay companion; "there is but one thing on earth should make a bold man cold-hearted."

"And what may that be?" asked the other; "to lose his dinner?"

"No, good life!" exclaimed the first,—"to lose his lady's love."

"Ay, is it there the saddle galls?" said Hal of Hadnock.

"Faith, not a whit," answered his fellow-traveller; "if it did, I should leave off singing. You are wrong in your

guess, Master Hal. I may lose my lady, but not my lady's love, or I am much mistaken; and while that stays with me I will both sing and hope."

"'Tis the best comfort," replied Hal of Hadnock, "and generally brings success. But what am I to call you, fair sir? for it mars one's speech to have no name for a companion."

"Now, were not my uncle's house within three miles," said the other, "I would pay you in your own coin, and bid you call me Dick of Andover; for I am fond of secrets, and keep them faithfully, except when they are likely to be found out; but such being the case now, you must call me Richard of Woodville, if you would have my friends know you mean a poor squire who has ever sought the places where hard blows are plenty; but who missed his spurs at Bramham Moor by being sent by his good friend Sir Thomas Rokeby to bear tidings of Northumberland's incursion to the King. I would fain have staid and carried news of the victory; but, good sooth, Sir Thomas said he could trust me to tell the truth clearly as well as fight, and that, though he could trust the others to fight, he could not find one who would not make the matter either more or less to the King, than it really was. See what bad luck it is to be a plain-spoken fellow."

"Good luck as well as bad," replied Hal of Hadnock; and in such conversation they pursued their way, riding not quite so fast as either had been doing when first they met, and slackening their pace to a walk, when, about half a mile farther forward, they quitted the high road and took to the narrow lanes of the country, which, as the reader may easily conceive, were not quite as good for travelling in those days, as even at present, when in truth they are often bad enough. They soon issued forth, however, upon a more open track, where the river again ran along by the roadside, sheltered here and there by copses which occasionally rose from the very brink; and, just as they regained it, the moon appearing over the low banks that fell crossing each other over its course, poured, from beneath the fringe of heavy clouds that canopied the sky above, her full pale light upon the whole extent of the stream. There was something fine but melancholy in the sight, grave and even grand; and though there were none of those large objects which seem generally necessary to produce the sublime, there was a feeling of vastness given by the broad expanse of shadow overhead, and the long line of glistening brightness below, broken by the thick black

masses of brushwood that here and there bent over the flat surface of the water.

"This is fine," said Hal of Hadnock; "I love such night scenes with the solitary moon and the deep woods and the gleaming river—ay, even the dark clouds themselves. They are to me like a king's fate, where so many heavy things brood over him, so many black and impenetrable things surround him, and where yet often a clear yet cold effulgence pours upon his way, grander and calmer than the warmer and gayer beams that fall upon the course of ordinary men."

His companion turned and gazed at him for a moment by the moonlight, but made no observation, till the other continued, pointing with his hand, "What is that drifting on the water? Surely 'tis a man's head!"

"An otter with a trout in his mouth, speeding to his hole," replied Richard of Woodville; "he will not be long in sight. —See! he is gone. All things fly from man. We have established our character for butchery with the brute creation; and they wisely avoid the slaughter-house of our presence."

"I thought it was something human, living or dead," replied Hal of Hadnock. "Methinks it were a likely spot for a man to rid himself of his enemy, and give the carrion to the waters; or for a love-lorn damsel to bury griefs and memories beneath the sleepy shining of the moonlight stream. The Leucadian promontory was an awful leap, and bold as well as sad must have been the heart to take it; but here, timid despair might creep quietly into the soft closing wave, and find a more peaceful death-bed than the slow decay of a broken-heart."

"Sad thoughts, sir, sad thoughts," replied Richard of Woodville; "and yet you seemed merry enough just now."

"Ay, the fit comes upon me as it will, comrade," replied the other; "and, good faith, I strive not to prevent it. I amuse myself with my own humours, standing, as it were, without myself, and looking inward like a spectator at a tournay—now laughing at all I see, now ready to weep; and yet for the world I would not stop the scene, were it in my power to cast down my warder at the keenest point of strife, and say, 'Pause! no more!' Sometimes there lives not a merrier heart on this side the sea, and sometimes not a sadder within the waters. At one time I could laugh like a clown at a fair, and at others would make ballads to the little stars, full of sad homilies."

"Not so, I," rejoined Richard of Woodville. "I strive

for an equal mind. I would fain be always light-hearted; and though, when I am crossed, I may be hot and hasty, ready to strive with others or myself, yet, in good truth, I soon learn to bear with all things, and to endure the ills that fall to my portion, as lightly as may be. Man 's a beast of burden, and must carry his pack-saddle; so it is better to do it quietly than to kick under the load. Out upon those who go seeking for sorrows, a sort of commodity they may find at their own door! One whines over man's ingratitude; another takes to heart the scorn of the great; another broods over his merit neglected, and his good deeds forgotten; but, were they wise, and did good without thought of thanks —were they high of heart, and knew themselves as great in their inmost soul as the greatest in the land—were they bright in mind, and found pleasure in the mind's exercise—they would both merit more and repine less, ay, and be surer of their due in the end."

"By my life, you said you were no clerk, Richard of Woodville," cried his companion, "and here you have preached me a sermon, fit to banish moon-sick melancholy from the land. But say, good youth, is yonder light looking out of your uncle's hall window—there, far on the other side of the stream?"

"No, no," answered Woodville; "ride after it, and see how far it will lead you. You will soon find yourself neck deep in the swamp. 'Tis a Will-o'-the-wisp. My uncle's house lies on before, beyond the village of Abbot's Ann, just a quarter of a mile from the Abbey; so, as the one brother owns the hall, and the other rules the monastery, they can aid and countenance each other, whether it be at a merry-making or a broil. Then, too, as the good Abbot is as meek as an ewe in a May morning, and Sir Philip is as fiery as the sun in June, the one can tame the other's wrath, or work up his courage, as the case may be—but here we see the first houses, and lights in the window, too. Why, how now! Dame Julien has not gone to bed—but, I forgot, there is a glutton mass to-morrow, and, as the reeve's wife, she must be cooking capons, truly. But, hark! there is a sound of a cithern, and some one singing. Good faith, they are making merry by their fireside, though curfew has tolled long since. Well, Heaven send all good men a cheerful evening, and a happy hearth! Perhaps they have some poor minstrel within, and are keeping up his heart with kindness; for Julien is a bountiful dame, and the reeve, though somewhat hard upon

the young knaves, is no way pinched when there is a sad face at his door. Well, fair sir, we shall soon be home. A pleasant place is home; ay, it is a pleasant place, and, when far away, we think of it always. God help the man who has no home! and let all good Christians befriend him, for he has need."

Although Hal of Hadnock made no farther observations upon his companion's mood and character, there was something therein that struck and pleased him greatly; and he was no mean judge of his fellow-men, for he had mingled with many of every class and degree. Quick and ready in discovering, by small traits, the secrets of that complicated mystery, the human heart, he saw, even in the love of music and poetry, in a man habituated to camps and fields of battle, a higher and finer mind than the common society of the day afforded; for it must not be thought, that either in the knight or the knight's son, of our old friend Chaucer, the poet gave an accurate picture of the gentry of the age. That there were such is not to be doubted—but they were few; and the generality of the nobles and gentlemen of those times were sadly illiterate and rude. The occasional words Richard of Woodville let drop, too, regarding his own scheme of home philosophy, showed, his companion thought, a strength and vigour of character which might be serviceable to others as well as himself, in any good and honourable cause; and Hal of Hadnock, as they rode on, said to himself, "I will see more of this man."

After passing through the little village, and issuing out again into the open country, they saw, by the light of the moon, now rising higher, and dispersing the clouds as she advanced, a high isolated hill standing out, detached from all the woods and scattered hedge-rows round. At a little distance from its base, upon the left, appeared the tall pinnacles and tower of an abbey and a church, cutting dark against the lustrous sky behind; and, partly hidden by the trees on the right, partly rising above them, were seen the bold lines of another building, in a sterner style of architecture.

"That is your uncle's dwelling, I suppose?" said Hal of Hadnock, pointing on with his hand. "Shall we find any one up? It is hard upon ten o'clock."

"Oh, no fear," replied Richard of Woodville. "Good Sir Philip Beauchamp sits late in the hall. He will not take his white head to the pillow for an hour or two; and the ladies

like well to keep him company. Here, to the left, is a shorter way through the wood; but look to your horse's footing, for the woodmen were busy this morning, and may have left branches about."

In less than five minutes more they were before the embattled gates of one of those old English dwellings, half castle, half house, which denoted the owner to be a man of station and consideration—just a step below, in fortune or rank, those mighty barons who sheltered themselves from the storms of a factious and lawless epoch, in fortresses filled with an army of retainers and dependants. As they approached, Richard of Woodville raised his voice and called aloud,

"Tim Morris! Tim Morris!" He waited a moment, singing to himself the two verses he had repeated before—

> "'The porter rose again certaine
> As soon as he heard John call;'"

and then added, "But it will be different now, I fancy; for honest Tim is as deaf as a miller, and his boy is sound asleep, I suspect. Tim Morris, I say!—He will keep us here all night:—Tim Morris!—How now, old sluggard!" he continued, as the ancient porter rolled back the gate; "were you snoring in your wicker-chair, that you make us dance attendance, as you do the country folk of a Monday morning?"

"'Tis fit they should learn to dance the Morris dance, as they call it, Master Dick," answered the porter, laughing, and holding up his lantern. "God yield ye, sir! I thought you were gone for the night, and I was stripping off my jerkin."

"Is Simeon of Roydon gone, then?" asked Woodville.

"Nay, sir, he stays all night," answered the porter. "Here, boy! here, knave! turn thee out, and run across the court to take the horses."

A sleepy boy, with senses yet but half awake, crept out from the door, and followed Richard of Woodville and his companion, as they rode across the small space that separated the gate from the Hall itself. There, at a flight of steps, leading to a portal which might well have served a church, they dismounted; and, advancing before his fellow-traveller, Richard of Woodville raised the heavy bar of hammered iron, which served for a latch, and entered the hall, singing aloud—

'As I rode on a Monday,
Between Wettenden and Wall,
All along the broad way,
I met a little man withal.'"

As he spoke he pushed back the door for Hal of Hadnock to enter, and a scene was presented to his companion's sight which deserves rather to begin than end a chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE HALL AND ITS DENIZENS.

The hall of the old house at Dunbury—long swept away by the two great destroyers of man's works, Time and Change—was a spacious vaulted chamber, of about sixty feet in its entire length, by from thirty-five to forty in width; but, at the end next the court, a part of the pavement, of about nine feet broad, and some eighteen or twenty inches lower than the rest, was separated from the hall by two broad steps running all the way across. This inferior space presented three doors; the great one communicating at once with the court, and two others in the angles, at the right side and the left, leading to chambers in the rest of the building. At the further end of the hall, on the left, was another small door, opposite to which there appeared the first four steps of a staircase, which wound away with a turn to apartments above. There was a high window over the principal entrance, from which the room received, in the daytime, its only light; and about half way up the chamber, on the left hand, was the wide chimney and hearth, with seats on either side, and two vast bars of iron between them for burning wood. In the midst of the pavement stood a long table, with some benches, one or two stools and a great chair, in which the master of the mansion seated himself at the time of meals; but the hall presented no other ornament whatever, except a number of lances, bows, cross-bows, axes, maces, and other offensive arms, which were ranged with some taste against the walls. The armoury was in another part of the house, and these weapons seemed only admitted here to be ready in case of immediate need; for those were times in which

men did not always know how soon the hand might be called upon to defend the head.

When Richard of Woodville and his companion entered, some six or seven large logs, I might almost call them trees, were blazing on the hearth; and, in addition to the glare they afforded, a sconce of seven burners above the chimney shed a full light upon the party assembled round the fire. That party was very numerous, for several maids and retainers, of whom it may not be necessary to speak more particularly, were scattered round the principal personages, busy with such occupations for the evening as were common in a rude age, when intellectual pursuits were very little cultivated.

The group in front, however, deserves more attention, consisting of seven persons, most of whom we shall have to speak of more than once in the course of these pages. In the seat within the chimney, just opposite the door, sat the master of the mansion, a tall powerful old man, who had seen many a battle-field in his day, during that and the preceding reign, and had borne away the marks of hard blows upon his face. He was spare and large boned in form, with his hair and beard* very nearly white; but he was hale and florid withal, and his countenance, though strongly marked, had an expression of kindness and good humour, not at all incompatible with the indications of a quick and fiery temper, which were to be discovered in the sparkle of his undimmed blue eye, and the sudden contraction of his brow when anything surprised him. The seat on the other side of the fire was not visible from the door by which the two wayfarers entered; but beyond the angle of the chimney, protruded into the light, the arm, shoulder, and part of the head of another tall old man, apparently clothed in the grey gown of some monastic order.

On the left of Sir Philip Beauchamp was seated a young lady, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age, with her arm resting on his knee, and her head and figure bent gracefully towards him. Her hair was as black as jet, her skin soft and clear, and her complexion somewhat pale, though a slight tinge of the rose might be seen upon her cheek. Her eyes, like her father's, were of a deep clear blue, though the

* The beard was, at this time, usually shaved off by the English nobles; but many of the older barons still retained it, and I find the mustachio very frequently in contemporaneous representations of younger knights.

long black fringes that bordered her eyelids in a long sweeping line, made them, at a distance, look as dark as her hair. She seemed neither above nor below the ordinary height of woman; and her whole figure, though by no means thin, was slim and delicate. The small exquisite foot and rounded ancle inclining gracefully towards the fire, were displayed by the posture in which she had placed herself; and the hand that rested on her father's knee, with long fingers tapering to the point, showed in every line the high Norman blood of her race.

Next to Isabel Beauchamp, the only daughter of the old knight, was another lady, perhaps a year younger. She was in several respects strikingly contrasted to her fair companion, though hardly less beautiful. Her hair was of a light glossy brown, catching a warm gleam wherever the light fell upon it, as fine as silk new spun from the cone, yet curling in large bunches wherever it could escape from the bands that confined it. Her complexion was fair and glowing; her cheek warm with health, and her skin as soft and smooth as that of a child. To look upon her at a little distance, one would have expected to find the merry grey or blue eye, so often seen in the pretty village maid; but hers was dark brown, large, and full, and soft, yet with a laughing light therein, that seemed to speak a buoyant and a happy heart. In form she was somewhat taller than the other; but though her waist looked as if it would have required no giant's hand to span it round, yet there was that sort of full and graceful sweep in all the lines, which painters and statuaries, I believe, call *contour*. Nought but the tip of one foot was seen from beneath the long and flowing petticoat then in fashion; but even from that, one might judge that nothing much more neat and small ever beat the turf, except amongst the elves of fairy land. Her hand rested upon a frame of embroidery, at which she had been working, and her head was slightly bent forward, as if to hear something said by the good Abbot of the convent, who sat opposite to his brother, in the seat within the chimney. But between her and him, was another group, consisting of three persons, which somewhat detached itself from the rest. Two were seated, a lady and a gentleman, and the third was standing with his arms folded on his chest a little behind the others.

The backs of these three were turned towards the door by which Woodville and his companions entered; and they were somewhat in the shade, being placed between the lower end

of the hall and the light both of the fire and the sconce; but as we are now looking at the picture of the whole, we may as well examine the details before we proceed.

The lady bore a striking resemblance in features, complexion, and form, to Isabel Beauchamp, whom we have already described; and the Lady Catherine might well be taken, as was often the case, for her cousin's sister. She was taller, indeed, though not much; but the chief difference was in the expression of the two countenances. Catherine's wanted all the gentleness, the tenderness, the thoughtfulness, of Isabel's. It could assume a look of playful coquetry, it could seem grave, it could seem joyous; but with each expression there mingled a touch of pride, perhaps, too, of vanity; and a scornful turn of the lip and well-chiseled nostril, as well as a quick flash of the eye, spoke the rash and haughty spirit which too certainly dwelt within her breast.

We are the slaves of circumstances from our cradle; and the mother and the nurse form as much part of our fate as any of the other events which mould our character, guide our course, and lead us to high station, retain us in mediocrity, or plunge us into misfortune. Catherine Beauchamp, like her cousin, was an only child, and an heiress; but her mother had brought large possessions to her father, and with those large possessions an inexhaustible store of pride. She had looked upon herself, indeed, as her husband's benefactor, for he was a younger brother, of small estate; and, after his death, she and a foolish servant had rivalled each other in instilling into her daughter's mind high notions of her own importance. In this, as in many another thing, the mother had proved herself weak; and the spoilt child had early shown her the result of her own folly. She did not live long enough to correct her error, even if she had possessed sense enough to make the effort; and when Catherine came to the house of her uncle, as his ward, her character was too far fixed to render any lessons effectual, but the severe ones of the world. There, then, she sat, beautiful, rich, vain, and haughty, claiming all admiration as her due, and believing that even her faults ought to be admired for her loveliness and her wealth.

Beside her was placed her mother's nearest relation, a distant cousin, named Simeon of Roydon. He was a tall, robust, well-proportioned man, of two or three and thirty years of age, with a quantity of light hair close cut in front, and left long upon the back o the head and over the temples.

His features were in general good; and what with youth and health, a florid complexion, fair skin, bright keen eyes, an aquiline nose, somewhat too much depressed, and an air of calm self-importance and courtly ease, he was the sort of man so often called handsome by those who little consider or know in what beauty really consists. Nothing, indeed, that dress could do, was left undone, according to the fashions of the day, to set off his person to the best of advantage. His long limbs were clothed in the light-coloured breeches and hose, without division from the waist to the foot, which were then generally worn by men of the higher class; but so tightly did they fit, that scarce a muscle of the leg might not be traced beneath; and his coat was also cut so close to his shape, that except on the chest, where, perhaps, some padding added to the appearance of breadth, the garment seemed to be but an outer skin. His shoes exhibited points of at least six inches in length beyond the toe; and the sleeves of his mantle, which he continued to wear even in the hall, hung down till they swept the floor. He wore a dagger in his girdle with a jewelled hilt, and a clasp upon his coat with a ruby set in gold; while on his thumb appeared a large signet-ring of a very peculiar fashion and device.

Notwithstanding dress, however, and good features, and a countenance under perfect command, there were certain minute, but very distinct signs, to be perceived by an eye practised in the study of the human character, which betrayed the fact, that his smooth exterior was but a shell containing a less pleasant core. There was a wandering of the eyes, which did not always seem to move in the same orbits; there was an occasional quiver of the lower lip, as if words which might be dangerous were restrained with difficulty; there was a look of keen, eager, almost fierce, inquiry, when anything was said, the meaning of which he did not at once comprehend; and then a sudden return to a bland and sweet expression almost of insipidity, which spoke of something false and hollow. He was talking to Catherine Beauchamp, when Richard of Woodville and Hal of Hadnock entered, in gay tones, often mingling a low laugh with his conversation, and eying his own foot and leg as it was stretched out towards the fire, with an air of great self-admiration and satisfaction.

The figure of the third person, who stood close behind the lady—as if he had come round thither and left vacant a stool

which appeared on the other side, to take part in her conversation with Sir Simeon of Roydon—was as tall and finer in all its proportions than that of the knight who sat by her side. His chest was broader; his arms more muscular; the turn of his head, and the fall of his shoulders, more graceful and symmetrical. His dark hair curled short round his forehead, and on his neck; his straight-cut features, of a grave and somewhat stern cast, wore their least pleasing look when in repose; for they wanted but the fire of expression to light them up in a moment, and render them all bright and glowing. His eye, however, the feature which soonest receives that light, had in it a fixed melancholy, which scarcely even left it when he smiled; and now, though he had come round thither to interchange a few words with Catherine, his betrothed wife, and her gay kinsman, Sir Henry Dacre had fallen into thought again, and remained standing with his arms folded on his chest, and his look fixed upon Isabel Beauchamp, as she leaned upon her father's knee. His gaze was intense, thoughtful—I might call it inquiring; but yet it was not rude, for he knew not that his eyes were so firmly fixed upon her. He was buried in his own thoughts; and perhaps the peculiar investigating expression of that look might be accounted for by supposing that he was asking questions, difficult to solve, of his own heart.

Isabel herself did not remark that he was gazing at her, for she was listening to some anecdote of other days which her father was telling. But the old knight did observe the glance of his young friend, and he observed it with pain, yet "more in sorrow than in anger;" for there were some things for which he bitterly grieved, but which could not be amended. He broke off his story for a moment to mutter to himself, "Poor fellow!" and just at that instant his eye lighted upon Richard of Woodville, as the young traveller opened the great door of the hall. His brow contracted while perhaps one might count ten, but was speedily clear again, and he exclaimed, laughing aloud—"Ha! here is Dickon again! I thought he would not go far."

Every one turned round suddenly; and all laughed gaily, except one. But the fair girl with the rich brown hair, sitting next to Isabel Beauchamp, gazed down the hall, with a smile indeed, but with a kindly look gleaming forth through her half-closed, merry eyes.

"Ah, run-away!" cried Isabel Beauchamp, still laughing; "so you have come back?"

"Yes, sweet cousin," replied Richard of Woodville, advancing up the hall with his companion; "but I have a cause—I should have been half way to Winchester else.—Here is a gentleman, sir," he continued, addressing his uncle, "whom I have met seeking the right way, and finding the wrong; and I failed not in promising him your hospitality for the night."

"Right, Richard—you did right!" replied the old knight, raising his tall form from the seat by the fire. "Sir, you are most welcome. Quick, Hugh of Clatford, leave cutting that bow, and speed to the buttery and the kitchen. Bid them bring wine and meat. I pray you, sir, take the seat by the fire."

"Nay, not so, noble sir," replied Hal of Hadnock, in a courteous tone. "I am not one to take the place of venerable years and high renown. Thanks for your welcome, and good fortune to your roof-tree. I beseech you, let me make no confusion. I will place me here;" and he drew a stool from the table somewhat nearer to the fire, and seated himself, while all eyes were fixed upon him.

Richard of Woodville, too, took a better view of his companion than he had hitherto obtained, and that view satisfied him that he had not introduced to his uncle's hall a guest, who, in point of rank and station, at least, was not well deserving of a place therein.

The stranger was, as I have already said, a tall and somewhat slim young man, perhaps four or five and twenty years of age, with black hair and close-shaved beard, keen dark eyes, long and sinewy limbs, and a chest of great width and depth. His features were remarkably fine, his brow wide and expansive, his forehead high, and the whole expression of his countenance noble and commanding. His dress was rich and costly, without being gaudy. His coat of deep brown, covering the hips, like that of a crossbowman, was of the finest cloth, and ornamented with small lines of gold, in a quaint but not ungraceful pattern. Instead of the hood then commonly worn, his head was covered with a small cap of velvet, and one long pennache, or feather, clasped with a large jewel; his dagger and the hilt of his sword were both studded with rubies, and though his riding-boots of untanned leather were cut square off at the toe, instead of being encumbered with the long points still in fashion, over them were buckled, with a broad strap and flap, a pair of gilt spurs, showing that he had seen service in arms, and had

won knightly rank. His tight-fitting hose were of a light philimot, or brownish yellow colour, and round the leg, below the knee, was a mark, as if the impression of a thong, seeming to prove that when not in riding attire, he was accustomed to wear shoes so long, that the horns points were obliged to be fastened up by a gilt chain, as was then not unusual. His manner was highly courteous; but it was remarked, that at first he committed what has, in most ages, been considered an act of rudeness, remaining with his head covered some minutes after he entered the hall. But, at length, seeming suddenly to remember that such was the case, he took off his cap, and laid it on the table.

Sir Philip Beauchamp, without asking any question of his guest, proceeded at once to name to him the different persons assembled round the fire; but as we have already heard who they were, it is needless to give a recapitulation here. Richard of Woodville, however, marked or fancied, that as the old knight pronounced the name of Sir Simeon of Roydon, a brief glance of recognition passed between that personage and his companion of the road; but neither claimed the other as an acquaintance, and Woodville said nothing to call attention to what he had observed.

"It will seem scarcely courteous, sir," said the guest, as Sir Philip ended, "not to give you my own name, though you in your hospitality will not ask it; but yet, for the present, I will beg you to call me simply Hal of Hadnock; and ere I go, Sir Philip, to your own ear I will tell more. And now, pray let me not kill mirth, or break off a pleasant tale, or stop a sweet lay; for doubtless you pass the long eves of March as did the knights and dames in our old friend Chaucer's dreams—

> 'Some to rede old romances,
> Them occupied for ther pleasances,
> Some to make verèlaies and laies,
> And some to other diverse plaies.'"

"Nay, sir," answered the old knight, who had glanced with a smile at his guest's gilded spurs, as he gave himself the name of Hal of Hadnock, "we were but talking of some old deeds of arms, which, doubtless, you in your career have often heard of. As to lays, when my nephew Richard is away, we have but little poesy in the house, except when this sweet ward of mine, Mary Markham, will sing us a gay ditty."

"Not to-night—not to-night!" cried the lady on Isabel Beauchamp's left; "I am not in tune to-night."

Isabel bent her head to her fair companion, and whispered a word which made the blood come warm into Mary Markham's cheek; but Catherine, with a gay toss of her head, and a glance of her blue eye at the handsome stranger, exclaimed—"I love neither lay nor ballad; they are but plain English twisted out of form, and set to a dull tune."

"Indeed, lady!" said the stranger, gazing upon her with an incredulous smile. "I have ever thought that music and verse made sweet things sweeter; and, methinks, even now, were it some tender lay addressed to your bright looks, you would not find the sounds so rude."

A smile passed round the little circle, but did not visit the lip of Sir Henry Dacre; and though Catherine Beauchamp laughed with a scornful smile, it seemed as if she knew not well whether to look upon the stranger's words as kind or uncourteous.

"Ha, Kate! he touched you there," said the old knight. "What think you, Abbot? has not our guest judged our niece aright?"

"I believe it is so with all ladies," answered the Abbot, gravely; "they find the words of praise sweet, and the words of blame bitter, whether it be in song or saying. You men of the world nurture them in such folly. You flatter them too much; so that, like the tongue of a wine-bibber, they can taste nothing but what is high-seasoned."

"Faith, not a whit, reverend lord," cried Hal of Hadnock, gaily; "craving your forgiveness, we deal with them as heaven intended. Fair and delicate in mind and frame, we shelter their persons from all rough winds and storms, as far as may be, and their ears from all harsh sounds. They were not made to cope with the rough things of life; and if they find wholesome exercise for body and soul, good father, in the chase and in the confessional, it is as much as is needed. The Church has the staple trade for truth, especially with ladies; and for any laymen to make it their merchandise would be against the laws of Cupid's realm."

"I fear you speak lightly, my son," said the Abbot, with a good-humoured smile; "but here comes your meal, and I will give it my blessing."

By such words as these, the ice of new acquaintance was soon broken, and, as the guest sat down at the side of the long table, to partake of such viands as his entertainer's hospitality provided for him, the party round the fire separated into various groups. The good master of the mansion

approached to do the honours of his board, and press the stranger to his food. Catherine seemed smitten with a sudden fit of affection for her uncle, and placed herself near him, where, with no small spice of coquetry, she sought to engage the attention of the visitor to herself. Sir Henry Dacre remained talking by the fire with Isabel Beauchamp; and, whatever was the subject of their discourse, the faces of both remained grave, almost sad; while, at a little distance, Richard of Woodville conversed in low tones with fair Mary Markham, and their faces presented the aspect of an April sky, with its clouds and its sunshine, being sometimes overshadowed by a look of care and anxiety, sometimes smiling gaily, as if the inextinguishable hopes of youth blazed suddenly up into a flame, after burning low and dimly for a while, under some cold blast from the outward world.

The Abbot had resumed his seat by the fire, and Sir Simeon of Roydon had not quitted his; but the latter, though the good monk spoke to him from time to time, seemed buried in his own thoughts, answered briefly, and often vaguely, and then fell into a reverie again, turning occasionally his eyes upon his fair kinswoman and the stranger with an expression of no great pleasure.

With the old knight and Catherine Beauchamp, in the meanwhile, Hal of Hadnock kept up the conversation gaily, seeming to find a pleasure in so mingling sweet and bitter things together, in his language to the lady, as sometimes to flatter, sometimes to pique her; and thus, without her knowing it, he contrived to put her through all her paces, like a managed horse, till every little weakness and fault in her character was displayed, one after another.

At first, Sir Philip Beauchamp was amused, and laughed at the stranger's merry jests, thinking, "It will do Kate good to hear some wholesome truth from an impartial tongue;" but as he saw that, whether intentionally or not, the words of Hal of Hadnock had the effect of bringing out all the evil points in her disposition to the eyes of his guest, he grew uneasy for his brother's child, and felt all her faults more keenly from seeing her thus expose them, in mere vanity, to the acquaintance of an hour. He saw, then, with satisfaction, his guest's meal draw towards a close, and, as soon as it was done, proposed that they should all retire to rest.

There was some consideration required as to what chamber should be assigned to Hal of Hadnock,—for small pieces of

ceremony were, in those days, matters of importance,—but Sir Philip Beauchamp decided the matter, by telling Richard of Woodville to lead the visitor to the rose-tapestry room, and to place a good yeoman to sleep across his door. It was one of the principal guest-chambers of the house; and its selection showed that the good knight judged his nephew's fellow-traveller to be of higher rank than he assumed.

Lighted by a page, Richard of Woodville led the way, and entered with his companion, when they reached the apartment to which they had been directed. Although it was now late, he remained there more than an hour, in conversation deeply interesting to himself, at least.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOREGONE EVENTS.

"Come," Richard of Woodville," said his companion, as soon as they entered the chamber of the rose-tapestry, "let us be friends. You have served me at my need; and I would fain serve you; but I must first know how."

"Faith, sir, that is not easy," answered Woodville, "for I do not know how myself."

"Well, then, I must think for you, Richard," rejoined Hal of Hadnock; "what stays your marriage?"

Woodville gazed at him with some surprise, and then smiled. "My marriage!—with whom?" he asked.

"Nay, nay," answered his new friend, "waste not time with idle concealments. I am a man who uses his eyes; and I can tell you, methinks, all about every one in the hall we have just left."

"Well, stay yet a moment, till we can be alone," replied Woodville; "they will soon bring you a livery of wine and manchet bread."

"In pity stop them," cried Hal of Hadnock; "I have supped so late that I can take no more." But, as he was speaking, a servant entered with a cup of hot wine, and a small roll of fine bread upon a silver plate. As bound in courtesy, the guest broke off a piece of the manchet, and put the cup to his lips; but it was a mere ceremony, for he did

not drink; and the man, taking away the rest of the wine and bread, quitted the room.

"Now, Richard, you shall see if I be right," continued Hal of Hadnock. "There is one pretty maid, called Mary Markham, or I heard not your uncle right, whose cheek sometimes changes from the soft hue of the rose's outer leaves, to the deep crimson of its blushing breast, when a certain Richard of Woodville is near; and there is one good youth, called Richard of Woodville, who can whisper sweet words in Mary Markham's ear, while his uncle holds converse with a new guest at a distance."

Woodville laughed, and made no answer; and his companion went on.

"Well, then, there is a fair Lady Catherine, beautiful and witty, but somewhat shrewish withal, and holding her own merits as most rare jewels, too good to be bestowed on ordinary men; who would have a lover, like a bird in a cage, piping all day to her perfections, and would think him well paid if she gave him but one of the smiles or looks whereof she is bountiful to those who love her not: and, moreover, there is one Sir Harry Dacre, a noble knight and true—for I have heard his name ere now—whom I should fancy to be her husband, were it not that——"

"Why should you think them so nearly allied?" asked Woodville.

"Because she gave him neither word nor look," replied Hal of Hadnock. "Is not that proof enough with such a dame?"

"You have read them but too rightly," rejoined Richard of Woodville, with a sigh. "He is not, indeed, her husband, but as near it as may be—betrothed in infancy; a curse upon such doings, that bind together in the bud two flowers that but destroy each other's blossoms as they grow. They are to be wedded fully when she sees twenty years; and poor Dacre, as noble and as true a heart as e'er was known, looks sternly forward to that day, as a prisoner does to the hour of execution; for she has taught him too early, and too well, all those secrets of her bosom which a wiser woman would have hidden."

"He does not love her, that is clear," answered his companion, in a graver tone than he had hitherto used. "Did he never love her?"

"No, not with manly love," replied Richard of Woodville. "I remember well, when we were both boys together, and

she as lovely a girl as ever was seen, he used to be proud then of her beauty, and call her his fair young wife. But even then she began the lessons, of which she has given him such a course, that never pale student at Oxford was better indoctrinated in Aristotle, than he is in her heart. Even in those early days she would jeer and scoff at him, and if he showed her any little tenderness, would straightway strive to make him angry; would pretend great fondness for some other—for me—for any one who happened to be near; would give his gifts away; admire whatever was not like him. Oh, then fair hair was her delight, blue eyes were beautiful. She hated him, I do believe, because she was tied to him, and that was the only bond upon her own capricious will; so that she resolved to use him as a boy does a poor bird tied to him by a string, pulling it hither and thither till its little heart beats unto bursting with such cruel tyranny! Had she begun less early, indeed, her power of grieving him would have been greater, for he was well inclined to let affection take duty's hand, and love her if he could. But she herself soon ended that source of torture. She may now play the charmer with whom she will, she cannot wring his heart with jealousy."

"He does not love her, that is clear," repeated Hal of Hadnock, in a still graver tone, "but he may love another."

"Ha!" exclaimed Woodville; "whom think you, sir?"

"Nay," replied his companion, after a pause, "it is not for me, my good friend, to sow suspicious doubts or fears, where I find them not. I do believe Sir Harry Dacre will do all that is right and noble; and I did but mean to say, that his poor heart may know greater tortures than you dream of, if, tied as he is by the act of others, to a woman who will not suffer him to love her, he has met, or should hereafter meet, with one on whom all his best affections can be placed. I say not that he has,—I only say, such a thing may be."

Richard of Woodville gazed down upon the rushes on the floor for several moments with a thoughtful look. "I know of whom you would speak," he said at length; "but I think, in this, you have deceived yourself, sharp as your observation has been. Isabel has been the companion of both from youth; and to her, in early days, Dacre would go for consolation and kindness, when worn out by this cold, vain lady's caprice and perverseness. She pitied him, and soothed; and often have I heard her try to soften Catherine's conduct,

making it seem youthful folly and high spirits; and trying to take the venom from the wound. He looks upon Isabel as a sister—nothing more—I think."

Hal of Hadnock shook his head; and then suddenly turned to another subject. "Well," he said, "you will not deny that I am right in some things, and, therefore, as I am in your secret, whether you will or not, now answer me my question—What stays your marriage?"

"Good sooth, I cannot tell," replied Richard of Woodville; "the truth is, this dear lovely girl came here some years gone, none knew from whence; but it was my uncle brought her, and ever since he has treated her as a daughter. All have loved her, and I more than all; but day after day went by in sports and pleasures; and, in a full career of happiness, I did not think till yesterday of risking the present by striving to brighten the future. Last evening, however, I said some plainer words than usual. What she replied matters not; but I saw that, afterwards, she was not so gay as usual; and to-day I took a moment, when I thought good Sir Philip was in a yielding mood, and asked the hand of his dear ward—or daughter; for I must not hide from you that men have suspicions, there is blood of the Beauchamps in this same lady's veins. He gave me a rough answer, however; told me not to think of her, and would assign no reason why. I will not say we quarrelled, for I love him too much, and reverence him too much for that; but I said in haste, that if I were not to think of her, I would stay no longer where suing only bred regret; and that I would seek honour, if I could not find a bride. He answered it was the best thing I could do; and so, without more thought than to feed my horse, and bid them all farewell, I put foot in stirrup for my own place hard by West Meon, with the intent of seeking service in some foreign land, as the wars here have come to an end. My good uncle only laughed at me, and told them, as I mounted in the court, that Dickon was out of humour, but would soon find his good spirits again. I did not do so for a long way, however; but, as I went well sure of my lady's grace, I began to take heart after a-while, and resolved that she should hear of me from other shores, till I could claim her, and no one say me nay."

"It was a good resolve," answered his companion; "for in such a case I know not what else could be done. But whither did you intend to bend your steps—to France?"

"Nay, not to France," said Woodville; "I love not the

Frenchmen. If our good king, indeed, were again to draw the sword for the recovery of all that sluggish men and evil times have lost of our rightful lands since the Black Prince's death, right willingly would I follow thither to fight against the French, but not serve with them."

"But his royal thoughts are turned to other things," replied Hal of Hadnock; "he still holds the mind, I hear, to take the cross, and couch a lance for the sepulchre."

"That is gone by, I am told," answered Richard of Woodville; "this frequent sickness that attacks him has made him think of other things, men say; but, doubtless, you know better than I do?"

"Nay, I know nought about it," said his fellow traveller; "but it is predicted that he shall die at Jerusalem."

"Heaven send it," exclaimed Woodville; "for if he live till then, his will be a long reign, methinks."

"Amen!" rejoined the other; "but whither thought you, then, to go?"

"Perchance to the court of Burgundy," replied Richard; "or to some of those Italian states, where there are ever hard blows to be found, and honour to be gained by doughty deeds."

"That famous land of Italy is somewhat far from our poor northern isle," answered Hal of Hadnock; "especially for a lover. Methinks Burgundy were best; but, doubtless, since you have come back again, your resolution has been left on the road behind us."

"No, not a whit," cried Woodville; "what I judged best in haste some hours ago, I now judge best at leisure. I have told Mary that I go for her sweet sake, to make me a high name, and with Heaven's blessing I will do it."

"Well, then," answered his new friend, "if such be your determination, I know some noble gentlemen in the court of that same Duke of Burgundy, who may aid your advancement for Hal of Hadnock's sake."

Richard of Woodville smiled, replying, "Doubtless, you do, fair sir; but may I tell them you sent me to them?"

"If you will but wait a day or two," said the other, "I will write them a letter, which you shall take yourself; and you will find that I have bespoke you kind entertainment."

"Thanks, noble sir—many hearty thanks," rejoined the old knight's nephew; "wait for a time I must, for I will not go solitary and unprepared. I must have horses, and men, and arms of the new fashion. I must also sell some acres of

new copse, and some tons of old wine, to equip me for my own journey."

"Well, then, ere you go, you shall hear more from me," replied Hal of Hadnock; "and now, good Richard, let us talk more of the folks in the hall. I would fain hear farther. This Sir Harry Dacre, his face pleases me; there is thought and a high heart therein, or I read not nature's book aright. Methinks, if he were wise, he too would seek renown in arms, instead of dangling at a lady's side that loves him not. Perchance, if he were to seem to cast her by as worthless, and fix on honour for a mistress, her love—for who can tell all the wild whimsies of a capricious woman's heart?—would follow him."

"He might think that worse than the other," said Woodville; "I do not think he seeks her love."

"There he is wrong," answered his companion; "for it is against all rule of philosophy, when we are bound by a chain we cannot break, to let it rust and canker in our flesh. It is as well to polish it with any soft thing we can find; and, granted that she has lost his love, 'twere well he should have hers, if she is to be his wife."

"Perhaps he may long to break the chain," replied Richard, drily; "were both to seek it, such contracts have been annulled by law, and by the Church, ere now; and the Pope, or at least his cardinals, are not always stubborn against gold and reason. But I doubt she will consent," he added; "she loves a captive, and if she sees he seeks his freedom, she will resist of course."

"A most sweet temper," observed Hal of Hadnock; "yet it is to be thought of; and if I can help him, I will. To-morrow early, indeed, I thought to speed me back to Westminster; but I will stay an hour or two, and see if I cannot play with a capricious lady, with art equal to her own. At all events, I shall learn more of what are her designs."

"Designs! she has none!" exclaimed Richard of Woodville, "but to reign and triumph for the hour. Here has been Simeon of Roydon, doing her homage for these three days, as if she were the Queen of Love; and she has smiled upon him, for she still fancies she can so give Dacre pain; but no sooner did you come, than she turned all the archery of her eyes on you."

"Yet left a blank target," replied Hal of Hadnock. "But of this Sir Simeon of Roydon I would have honest men beware, my good friend. I know something of him."

"And he of you," answered Woodville.

"Ay?" asked his companion, "what makes you fancy so?"

"Why I too am one of those who use their eyes, fair sir," said Woodville.

"And not their tongues, good friend," rejoined the other. "Well, you are wise. But tell me, did not Sir Harry Dacre go with the Duke of Clarence into France?"

"Yes, it was there he gained his spurs last year," answered Richard; "he fought well, too, at Bramham Moor; and earlier still, when a mere boy, against the Scots, when they last broke in:—

'Muche hath Scotland forlore,
What at last, what before,
And little pries wonne.'"

"I thought I had heard of him," replied Hal of Hadnock. "However, if you hold your mind to go to-morrow, we will ride together, and can talk further of these matters by the way; so, for the present, good night, and fair dreams attend you."

"I must go and bid one of the men sleep across your door," said Richard of Woodville: "though this house is safe enough, yet it is as well always to be careful."

"It matters not, it matters not," answered his companion. "I have never found a man, against whom my own hand could not keep my head or my heart."

"As for your heart, sir," rejoined Woodville, laughing; "you may yet find a woman who will teach you better."

"I know not," replied Hal of Hadnock, laughing; "I am strong there, too; but no one can tell what is written in the stars," and thus they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GLUTTON MASS.

Breakfast was over, and yet, between the lower edge of the sun and the gentle sweeping line of the hills above which he was rising, not more than two hand-breadths of golden sky could be seen; for our ancestors were still, at that period, a matutinal people, rising generally before the peep of day,

and hearing the birds' first song. On a large, smooth green, at the back of the Hall, yet within the limits of the park by which it was surrounded, with Dunbury Hill and the lines of the ancient invaders' camp at the top, rising still grey and cold before their eyes, the group which we have described in the second chapter, with the exception of the Abbot, was assembled to practise or to witness some of the sports of the day. The ladies, having their heads now covered with the strange and somewhat cumbrous coifs then worn, stood upon a stone-paved path, watching the proceedings of their male companions; and with them appeared good Sir Philip Beauchamp, in a long furred gown, with Hal of Hadnock, talking gaily to Catherine, on his right hand.

"Well pitched, Hugh of Clatford," cried the old knight; "well pitched; a toise beyond Sir Simeon."

"I will beat him by two," exclaimed Richard of Woodville, taking the heavy iron bar which they were engaged in casting. "Here goes!" and, after balancing it for a moment in his hand, he tossed it high in the air, sending it several yards beyond any one who had yet played their part.

"Will you not try your arm, noble sir?" asked Sir Philip, turning to Hal of Hadnock.

"Willingly, willingly," replied the guest; "but Sir Henry Dacre has not yet shown his skill."

"He will not do much," said Catherine Beauchamp, in a low tone.

"Fie, Kate," cried Isabel, who overheard her; "that is untrue, as well as unkind."

As she spoke, Dacre took the bar, which had been brought back by one of the pages, and, without pausing to poise it carefully, as the rest had done, cast it within a foot or two of the spot which it had reached when sent from the hand of Woodville.

Hal of Hadnock then advanced, looking round with a gay laugh to the ladies, and saying, "I am upon my mettle before such bright eyes. Here, boy, give me the bar."

The page placed it in his hand; and, setting his right foot upon the mark where the others had stood, he swung himself gracefully backward and forward on one leg, for a moment, and then tossed the bar in air. So light, so easy, was his whole movement, that no one expected to see the iron go half the distance it had done before; but, to the surprise of all, it flew from his hand as if expelled from some of the military engines of the day, and, striking the ground full twenty paces

farther than it had yet done, bounded up off the sward and rolled on beyond.

"Well delivered! well delivered!" exclaimed Sir Philip Beauchamp; and the men and boys around clapped their hands and cried "Hurrah!"

"I will send it farther or break my arm," cried Richard of Woodville.

"If you do, I will beat you by a toise," replied Hal of Hadnock, laughing. But they all strove in vain; no one could toss the bar within several yards of the stranger's mark.

"And now for a leaping bar," cried Hal of Hadnock. "Oh! there stands one I see by the trees. Away, Woodville! place it how high you will."

"I will beat you at that, noble sir," said young Hugh of Clatford, who was reported the best jumper and runner in the country.

"And should you do so, I will give you a quiver of arrows with peacocks' feathers," rejoined the gentleman. "Now, take it in turns, I will leap last."

Sir Simeon of Roydon declined the sport, however, and Sir Harry Dacre stood back; but Clatford, and others of the old knight's retainers, took their stations, as well as Richard of Woodville; and the bar having been placed high in the notches, each took a run and leapt; some touching it with their feet, some clearing it clean.

Hal of Hadnock then gave a gay smile to his fair companions, with whom he had for the time resumed his place; and advancing at a walk, as if to put the pole up higher, he quickened his pace, at the distance of three or four steps, and cleared it by several inches.

"You try him higher, Hugh," cried Richard of Woodville, laughing; "I have done my best, good faith."

"Where will you put it?" asked the traveller, turning to the young retainer of the house.

"Oh, at the highest notch," answered Hugh of Clatford, lifting up the bar; "can you do that, sir?"

"I will see," replied Hal of Hadnock; "stand back a bit," and, taking a better start, he ran, and went over, with an inch to spare.

Poor Hugh was less fortunate, however, for though he nearly accomplished the leap, he tipped the bar with his heel, cast it down, and overthrowing his own balance, fell upon his face, amidst the laughter of his comrades. He rose somewhat abashed, with bloody marks of his contact with the

ground; but Hal of Hadnock laid his hand kindly on his arm, saying,

"Thou art a nimble fellow, on my life. I did not know there was a man in England could go so near me, as thou hast done. Here, my friend, thy sheaf of arrows is well won," and he poured some pieces of gold into his hand.

The words were more gratifying to the good yeoman than the money; and bowing low, he answered, "I was sure you were no ordinary leaper, sir, for few can go higher than I can."

"Oh, I am called Deersfoot," replied Hal of Hadnock, laughing; "get in and wash your face; for you have done well, and need not be ashamed to show it."

Some other sports succeeded; but the stranger took no further part therein, resuming his place by Catherine's side, apparently greatly smitten with her charms. The weak, vain girl, flattered by his attention, gave way to all the coquetry of her nature, made her fine eyes use their whole artillery of glances, whispered, and smiled, spoke soft, and sometimes sighed; till the good old knight, Sir Philip, not the best pleased with his niece's demeanour, broke off the amusements of the morning, exclaiming, "To the mass! to the mass, sirs! It is high time that we were on our way."

The sports, then, immediately ceased; and passing through the great hall, the court-yard, and the gates, the whole party, arranged two and two, walked on amidst the neighbouring wood towards the parish church. Hal of Hadnock kept his place by Catherine's side, and Sir Harry Dacre followed with Isabel; but, somewhat to Richard of Woodville's annoyance, Sir Philip Beauchamp retained Mary Markham to himself, while his nephew and Sir Simeon of Roydon came after, neither, perhaps, in the best of humours.

The noble party found the church crowded with the villagers, every woman having her basket with her, covered with a clean white napkin, but apparently crammed as full as it well could be; and Hal of Hadnock remembered that, as his companion had said the night before, this was one of the days appointed for those festivals which were then called, Glutton masses.

When the service was over, old Sir Philip advanced to leave the building with his household, not approving the disgraceful scene that was about to take place; but Hal of Hadnock whispered to his companion of the road,—

"Let us stay and see. I have never witnessed one of these feats of gormandizing."

"Well, we shall save the credit of the family," replied Richard of Woodville, in a low tone; "for the good priest looks upon my uncle as half a Lollard, because he will not stay in the church and eat till he bursts, in honour of the Blessed Virgin."

Hal of Hadnock and his new friend accordingly lingered behind; and hardly had the old knight passed through the doors, when a scene of confusion took place quite indescribable. Every one brought forward his basket. Some who had lost their store, hunted for it among the rest. Some hurried forward to present, what they considered, very choice viands to the priest. Many a pannier was overturned; and chickens, capons, huge lumps of meat, and leathern bottles of wine, mead, and ale, rolled upon the pavement. One or two of the latter got uncorked, and the contents streamed about amongst the napkins, which several of the women were spreading forth upon the ground. Knives were brandished; thumbs and fingers were cut; one man nearly poked out the eye of his better half in giving her assistance, and was heartily cuffed for his pains; and a fat chorister slipped in consequence of putting his foot upon a fine trout dressed in jelly, and fell prostrate on his back in the midst. The people roared, the priest himself chuckled, and was a long time ere he could get his flock, or his countenance, into due order.

A song to the Virgin was then sung by way of grace; and every one fell to, with an intention of outdoing his neighbour. To Richard of Woodville and his companion were assigned the places of honour near the clergy; and the priest, looking well pleased down the long aisle, literally encumbered with the preparations for excess, whispered to the old knight's nephew, with an air of triumph,—

"Well, I think we shall outdo Wallop this time, at least."

"Undoubtedly," replied Richard of Woodville, gravely; "but I fear you will think my friend and me no better than heathens, having brought nothing with us either to eat or drink."

"Poo! there is plenty—there is plenty," replied the good man, "and to spare. Eat as hard as we can, we shall be scarcely able to get through it; and it is fitting, too, that something be left for the poor. We will all do our best, however, and thank you for your help."

The onslaught was tremendous. One would have thought that the congregation had fasted for a month, so eagerly, so rapidly did they devour the provisions before them; and then

they took to their bottles and drinking-horns, and when they had assuaged their thirst, recommenced the attack upon the meat with renewed vigour.

Richard of Woodville, and Hal of Hadnock, had soon seen enough of the Glutton mass; and, at a hint from his companion, the former took an opportunity of whispering to the priest,—

"We must go, I fear; lest my uncle be angry at our absence."

"Well, well," said the worthy clerk, "if it must be so, we cannot help it; but 'tis a sad pity, Master Richard, that so good a man as the Knight of Dunbury, should be such a discourager of pious ordinances."

"It is, indeed," answered Woodville, in a solemn tone; "but all men have their prejudices; and you know, father, he loves the Church."

"Ay, that he does, that he does," replied the other, heartily; "he sent me two fat bucks last summer."

"Oh, yes, he loves the Church, he loves the Church!" rejoined Woodville, and gliding quietly down the side aisle, so that he might not disturb any of the congregation in their devout exercise of the jaws, he left the building, accompanied by Hal of Hadnock.

Both laughed as soon as they were out of the church; but the guest of Sir Philip Beauchamp soon fell into deep thought; and after walking forward for a little distance, he observed, "It is strange, how men are inclined to make religion subservient to all their appetites. What are such things as these? what are many of our solemn customs, but the self-same idolatrous rites practised by the ancient pagans, who deified their passions and their follies, and then took the simplest means of worshipping them?—What can be the cause of such perversity?"

"The devil! the devil!" answered Richard of Woodville; "he who leads every one on from one wickedness to another; who first teaches man to infringe God's commandment, in order to gratify some desire, and then, as that desire grows fat and strong upon indulgence, first persuades us that its gratification is pleasing to God, and in the end makes us worship it, as a god."

"But yet these same good folks fast and mortify themselves at certain times," said Hal of Hadnock; "and then carouse and revel, as if they had won a right to excess."

"To make up for lost time," said Woodville; "but the

truth is, it is like a man playing at cross and pile, who, when he has lost one stake, tries to clear off the score against him by doubling the next. We have all sins enough to atone for; and we play the penance against the indulgence, and the indulgence against the penance. Give me the man who always mortifies himself in all that is wrong; who fasts from anger, malice, backbiting, lying, and uncharitableness; who denies himself, at all times, excess in anything, and holds a festival every day, with gratitude to God for that which he, in his bounty, is pleased to give him. But, after all, it is very natural that these corruptions should take place, even in a faith like ours. Depend upon it, the purer a religion is the more strong will be the efforts of Sathanus to pervert it; so that men may walk along his broad high-road, while they think they are taking the way to everlasting salvation."

"There is truth in that, good Richard," replied his companion; "but I fear me, you have caught some of the doctrines of the Lollards, of whom you were speaking."

"Not a whit," answered Woodville; "I am a good catholic Christian; but I may see the evils which men have brought into the Church, without thinking ill of the Church itself; just as when looking at the Abbey down yonder, I see that a foolish architect from France has changed two of the fine old round arches, which were built in King Stephen's time, to smart pointed windows, all bedizened with I don't know what, without thinking the Abbey anything but a very fine building, notwithstanding."

Although Richard of Woodville would not admit that any impression had been made upon him by the preaching of the Lollards, certain it is, that the teaching of Wicliff and his disciples had led men generally to look somewhat narrowly into the superstitious practices of the day, and that the minds of many were imbued with the spirit of their doctrines, who, either from prejudice, timidity, or conviction, would not adopt the doctrines themselves. Nor was the effect transitory; for it lasted till, and prepared the way for, the Reformation.

In a thoughtful mood, both the young gentlemen proceeded on their way through the wood; and, on their arrival at the hall, found Sir Philip Beauchamp, and the rest of his family and guests, already seated at the early dinner of those days. The old knight received their excuses in good part, laughed at Hal of Hadnock's curiosity to see a Glutton mass, and insisted he should sit down and finish his meal with him.

"Had you been at Andover yesterday," he said, "you

might have seen another strange sight: the Mayor sit in the stocks, and a justice on either side of him."

"Indeed!" cried Hal of Hadnock, seriously; "that were a strange sight to see. Pray, on whose authority was it done? and what was the crime these magistrates committed?"

"Good truth, I know not," answered Sir Philip. "A party of wild young men, they say, did it; and, as for the crime, it is not specified: but, on my life, it was justice, though of a rash kind; for Master Havering, the Mayor, has worked well for such a punishment; though, belike, the hands that put him in were not the best fitted for the office."

"I should think not, certainly," replied Hal of Hadnock, in the same grave tone, and with an immovable countenance; though Richard of Woodville, who had contrived to seat himself next to Mary Markham, on the other side of the board, gave him a merry glance of the eye, as if he suspected more than he chose to say.

When the meal was over, which was not speedily, Hal of Hadnock proposed to take his departure; but Sir Philip, with all courtesy, besought him, at least, to stay till the afternoon meal, or supper (then usually served at four o'clock), with the hospitable intent of urging him afterwards to spend another night under his roof; and, in the meantime, he promised to show him his armoury, his horses, and his library; though, to say the truth, the suits of rich armour were more numerous than the books, and the horses more in number than the people who frequented the library. Hal of Hadnock, for reasons of his own, accepted the invitation; and Richard of Woodville, though his approaching departure was already announced, agreed to stay, in order to bear him company when he went.

I will not lead the patient reader through all the rooms of the hall, or detain him with a description of the armoury and its contents, or carry him to the stable, and show him all the horses of the good old knight, Sir Philip, from the battle-horse, which had borne him through many a stricken field in former days, to the ambling palfrey of his daughter Isabel. Hal of Hadnock, indeed, submitted to all this with a good grace; for he was a kind-hearted and considerate person, and little doubted that his friend Richard of Woodville was employing the precious moments to the best advantage with fair Mary Markham. To all these sights, with the discussion of sundry knotty points, regarding shields, and pallets, and unibers, the properties of horses, and the form and extent of

the manifaire, were given well nigh two hours; and, when Hal of Hadnock and his noble host returned to the great hall, they found it tenanted alone by Catherine Beauchamp and Sir Simeon of Roydon.

Richard and Dacre, Isabel and Mary, the lady said, were gone to walk together in the park; but she had waited, she added, with a coquettish air, thinking it but courtesy to give her uncle's honoured guest a companion, if he chose to join them.

So direct an invitation was, of course, not to be refused by Hal of Hadnock; and he thanked her with high-coloured gallantry for her consideration.

"Do you go too, Sir Simeon?" inquired Sir Philip Beauchamp; but the courtly knight replied that he had only waited to take his leave; as he had business to transact in the neighbourhood, and must be home ere night. Before Catherine and her companion set out, however, Sir Simeon drew her aside, as the relationship in which she stood towards him seemed to justify, and spoke to her for a moment eagerly. A few of his words caught the quick ear of Hal of Hadnock, as he stood talking to the old knight, who took care to impress him with the knowledge, that his fair niece was fully betrothed to Sir Harry Dacre; and though those words were, apparently, of small import, Hal of Hadnock remembered them long after.

"I will tell you all, if you come," replied Sir Simeon, to some question the lady had asked; "but mind, I warn you. —Will you come?"

"I do not know," answered Catherine, with a toss of the head; "it is your business to wait and see."

"Wait I cannot," rejoined the knight; "see I will;" and the lady, turning to her uncle and his companion, accompanied the latter through a long passage at the back of the hall, to the door which led to the ground where the sports of the morning had taken place.

The park of Dunbury was very like that described by old Chaucer:—

'—— A parke enclosed with a wall
In compace rounde, and by a gate small,
Who so that would he frelie mighten gone
Into this parke, ywalled with grene stone.
* * * * *
The soile was plain, and smoth, and wondir soft,
All overspread with tapettes that Nature
Had made herself, covirid eke aloft
With bowis grene, the flouris for to cure,
That in ther beautie thei mai long endure.'—

The walks around were numerous and somewhat intricate; and whether fair Catherine Beauchamp knew or not the direction that her friends had taken, she certainly did not follow the path most likely to lead to where they really were; but, as she and Hal of Hadnock walked along, she employed the time to the best advantage in carrying on the siege of his heart. He, for his part, humoured her to the full, having a firm conviction that it would be far better, both for Sir Henry Dacre and herself, that the imperfect marriage between them should be annulled at their mutual desire, than remain a chain upon them, only increasing in weight. It must not, indeed, be supposed that he took any very deep interest in the matter; but, as it fell in his way, he was willing enough to forward what he believed to be a noble-minded man's desire for emancipation from a very bitter sort of thraldom; and it is seldom an unpleasant or laborious task for a light-hearted man to sport with a capricious girl. Thus went he on, then, with that mixture of romantic gallantry and teasing jest, which is of all things the most exciting to the mind of a coquette, with sufficient admiration to soothe her vanity, but with not sufficient devotion ever to allow her to imagine that her triumph is complete. Neither did he let her gain any advantage; for, though it was evident that she clearly perceived the name he had assumed was not his own, he gave her no information, playing with her curiosity without gratifying it.

"But what makes you think," he asked, "that I am other than I seem? Why should I not be plain Hal of Hadnock, a poor gentleman from the Welsh marshes?"

"No, no, no," she said, "it is not so. A thousand things prove it: first, manners, appearance, dress. Why, are you not as fine as my good cousin a dozen times removed, Sir Simeon of Roydon, the pink of court gallants?"

"And yet I have heard that he is not as rich as an abbot," replied Hal of Hadnock.

"No, in truth," answered Catherine; "he is as poor as a verger; and, like the curlew, carries all his fortune on his back, I believe."

"I suspect not his own fortune only," rejoined her companion, "but a part of other men's."

"But then your knightly spurs, good sir," continued Kate, returning to the point; "you must be Sir Hal of Hadnock at the least. Now I never heard of that name amongst our chivalry; and I am deep read in the rolls of knighthood."

"Oh, I am newly dubbed," replied the gentleman, laughing; "but you shall know all some day, lady fair."

"I shall know very soon," answered Catherine; "for Simeon of Roydon will tell me."

"More, perhaps, than he knows himself," said Hal of Hadnock.

"Oh, he knows well enough," exclaimed Catherine Beauchamp. "He has already told me, that you are a man of noble birth and high estate, and promised to speak the name; but I would rather owe it to your courtesy than his."

"Nay, what would I not do for the love of your bright eyes?" asked Hal of Hadnock, in a tone half tender, half jesting; "methinks the light in them, even now, looks like the morning sun reflected from a dewdrop in a violet. But why should I tell you aught? I have been warned that you are another's. Out upon such cold contracts, that bind unwilling hearts together! It is clear, there is no great love in your heart for this Sir Harry Dacre."

"Not too much to lie comfortably in a hazel nut," answered Catherine.

"Then why do you not ask to have the marriage annulled?" demanded her companion. "There never yet was bond in which the keen eyes of the court of Rome could not find a flaw."

"Why, it would grieve his proud heart sadly," replied the lady; "yet I have often thought of it."

"If he be proud—and so he is," rejoined Hal of Hadnock, "he would never refuse to consent, however much it might vex him. Well, well, set yourself free from him, and then you shall know who I am. As for this fellow Roydon, he knows nothing, and will but lead you wrong; but were I you, I would be a free woman ere a year were over; and then, this fair hand were a prize well worth the winning to higher hearts than a Dacre or a Roydon."

With such conversation they wandered on for some time, without overtaking the party they had come out to seek. They saw them once at some distance, indeed, through the overhanging boughs of an opposite alley just fringed with early leaves; but they did not hurry their pace, and only met them at length at the door of the hall, as they were all returning. Sir Henry Dacre was then walking by Isabel's side, with his arms crossed upon his chest, and his brow sad and stern. As soon as he saw Catherine and her companion, he fixed his eyes inquiringly upon her, and seemed

to mark her heightened colour, and somewhat excited look —then fell into thought again; and then laid his hand upon her arm, saying, "I would speak with you for a moment, Kate."

"It must not be long," she replied, coldly; "for I have dipped my feet in the dew, and would fain dry them."

"It shall not be long," answered Sir Henry Dacre; and he remained with her behind, while the rest entered slowly. Ere they had passed the door, the anxious ear of Isabel heard high tones without; and, in a few minutes, as they paused for a moment in the hall, where the servants were already spreading the board for supper, Sir Henry entered, with a hasty step.

"My horse to the gate!" he said, addressing one of the attendants.

"At what hour, Sir Knight?" asked the servant.

"Directly!" answered Dacre. "The men can follow. Farewell, dear Isabel," he continued, turning to Catherine's cousin; "I can stay no longer.—Farewell, Mary!" He grasped Richard of Woodville's hand, but said nothing; and with a low and formal bow to Hal of Hadnock, turned towards the door leading to the court.

Isabel Beauchamp followed him quietly, laid her hand upon his arm, and spoke eagerly, but in a low tone.

"I cannot, I cannot, Isabel," he replied, aloud. "Dear girl, do not urge me. I shall forget myself—I shall go mad. Excuse me to your noble father—farewell!" and opening the large door, he issued forth, and closed it behind him.

Isabel Beauchamp turned with her eyes full of tears; but passing the rest silently, as if afraid to speak, she hurried to her own chamber, wept for a few minutes, and then sought her father.

The supper that day was a grave and silent meal. There was a stern cloud on old Sir Philip Beauchamp's brow when he came down to the hall; and, as he took his seat he asked, looking round, "Where is Catherine?"

"I know not," answered Mary Markham; "but she went to her own chamber when she came in."

"Shall I seek the lady, sir?" asked one of the retainers of the house, from the lower part of the table.

"No! let her be," replied the old knight; and then he murmured, "Perhaps she has still some shame—and if so, it is well."

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To Hal of Hadnock his demeanour was courteous, though so grave, that his guest could not but feel that some share in the disagreeable event, which had evidently taken place, was attributed to him; and though he knew that his intention was good, yet, like many another man, he had reason to feel sorry that he had meddled in other men's affairs at all. Supper was nearly over, the light was beginning to wane in the sky, and the stranger was thinking it was time to depart, when the porter's boy came into the hall, and, approaching Richard of Woodville, whispered something in his ear.

The young gentleman instantly rose, and went out into the court, but returned a moment after, and spoke a word to Hal of Hadnock, who started up, and followed him. In the court they found a man booted and spurred, and dusty from the road, holding by the bridle a horse, with one leg bent, and the head bowed down, as if exhausted by long exercise.

The man instantly uncovered his head, when he saw the gentlemen appear, and throwing down the bridle, advanced a step, while Hadnock gave him a quick sign, which he seemed to comprehend.

"Your presence is required immediately, sir," he said, without adding any name; "your father is ill—very ill—and I have lost some hours in seeking you. I heard of you, however, at Andover, then at the Abbey, then at the priest's house in the village, and ventured on here, as 'tis matter of life and death."

"You did right," said Hal of Hadnock, briefly, but with deep anxiety on his face. "Ill, say you? very ill? and I away!—Why, I left him better!"

"One of those fits again, sir," answered the man. "For an hour he was thought dead, but had regained his speech when I set out; yet the leeches much fear——"

"I come! I come!" answered Hal of Hadnock. "Speed on before; I will be in London ere day-break. Change your horse often, and lose no time. Buy a stout horse wherever you can find one, and have him ready for me on Murrel Green. Away, good fellow! Say that I am coming! —Richard, I must go at once."

"Well, I will with you, sir," replied Richard of Woodville; "you go to bid my good uncle adieu. I will order out the horses."

"So be it," answered Hal of Hadnock; "you shall be my

guide, for I must not miss my way;"—and, after giving the messenger some money, he turned, and re-entered the hall.

CHAPTER V.

THE ASSASSINATION.

Clouds had again come over the heavens as day declined, and the light had nearly faded from the sky; but yet the horses of Hal of Hadnock and Richard of Woodville had not appeared in the court-yard, and the former showed great anxiety to proceed at once. His gaiety was gone; and he stood, either playing, in deep thought, with the hilt of his dagger, the sheath of which hung from a ring in the centre of his belt, or listening for the horses, with his ear turned towards the door of the hall.

"I fear, sir, the news you have received are bad," said old Sir Philip Beauchamp, who, with the rest of the party, had by this time risen from table.

"A father's perilous sickness, noble Sir Philip," answered Hal of Hadnock; "one who might have been kinder, indeed; but still the tidings must ever be sad ones to a son's heart. I wonder that the horses be not ready."

"Go, Hugh, and see," replied Richard of Woodville; but a serving man, who had entered the moment before, stopped the messenger, saying—

"They will be here in a minute, sir. A shoe was found loose on the gentleman's steed, and John the smith has had to fasten it."

"Well, Dick, thou goest in good earnest at last," said the old knight, turning to his nephew; "and on my life I think it is the best thing thou canst do. Thou art a good soldier, and wilt raise thyself to renown. I need not tell thee what thy duties are; but thou must take a horse and arms of thine old uncle, whom thou mayest never see again, perchance. Choose them for thyself, boy. Thou wilt find wherewithal in that purse," and he placed a full one in his nephew's hand. "As my good brother, the Abbot, is not here, thou must content thyself with my benison. Be it upon thee, Richard! Love thy king, thy country, and thine honour. But, above all things, love God, fear his anger, hope in his

mercy, trust in his promises, and submit thine own reason in all things to his word. So shalt thou prosper in this world; so shalt thou be meet for another."

The young man caught his uncle's hand and kissed it; and the old knight pressed him for a moment in his arms.

"Here, Richard, take this gift of me," said Isabel: "'tis but a jewel for your baldrick."

Mary Markham did not speak; but after he had pressed his lips on Isabel's cheek, she offered hers silently, placing a ring in his hand.

"I will bear it to honour, and win you yet, Mary," said Woodville, in a low voice, as he took his parting kiss; and he felt that her cheek was wet with tears.

"Hark! there are the horses, noble sir," exclaimed Hal of Hadnock, turning to Sir Philip. "Once more, farewell! Your nephew shall give you further news of me; and may one day clear me in your eyes for somewhat you have thought amiss."

Then bidding the ladies adieu, he turned to the hall door, and mounted, with a princely largesse to the servants of the house. Richard of Woodville followed, sprang on his horse's back, and, giving one look back, rode through the gates after his companion.

The wood was dark and sombre, as they proceeded amidst its thick coverts; but when they issued forth, a faint glimmer of twilight served to guide them on the way, and they quickened their pace. There were lights in the windows of the cottages, too, as they passed through the village; and when they reached the other side, they caught a pale line of yellow light, peeping out from beneath the dark clouds upon the edge of the western sky, and gilding the water of the stream. Riding on quickly, they had not left the last house behind them five minutes, when Hal of Hadnock pulled up his horse short, exclaiming, "Hark! there is a scream!"

"'Tis but a screech-owl," answered Richard of Woodville; "they come forth in spring."

But as he spoke, there was another shriek, apparently before them; and each struck his horse with the spur, and dashed on. No other sound met their ear, however, except what seemed the distant galloping of a horse, which might be but the echo of their own beasts' feet. When they reached the spot where, on the preceding night, they had seen the wild fire over the moor, Hal of Hadnock again drew in his rein, saying, "It came from somewhere here."

"It seemed to me near where we then were," replied Richard of Woodville. "Perchance 'twas but some villagers got drunk at that Glutton mass. See, there is the otter again!"

"It was a shriek of pain or terror," answered his companion. "Otter!—that is no otter! Here, hold my horse," and springing from the saddle in a moment, he dashed down the bank, and plunged into the river. Though shallow in most places, it there formed a deep pool; but Hal of Hadnock, expert in all exercises alike, struck out at once, and caught the object he had seen, just as it was sinking. A feeling of horror and alarm seized him, as his hand grasped the long hair of a woman; but raising her head above the water again, he held it gently on his left arm, and with his right swam in towards the shore.

"Here, help, Richard," he cried, "set the horses free, and take her. 'Tis a woman!"

Woodville was down the bank in a moment, exclaiming, "Who is it?—who is it?"

"I know not," answered Hal of Hadnock, raising her so far above the water, that his companion could grasp her in his arms and lift her out; but as he himself followed, placing one knee on the shore, with a sad heart, he heard his companion exclaim, in the accents of deep grief—

"Good Heaven! it is Catherine!"

"Quick! bear her to the nearest house!" cried Hal of Hadnock; "the spark of life may be still there. I will follow with the horses."

"Up the short path to the right, lies the chanter's," cried Richard, raising the unhappy girl in his stout arms, and running along the road.

The horses were easily caught, and mounting one, and leading the other, Hal of Hadnock followed, obtaining a glance of his companion just as he turned from the highway, towards a spot where the thatch of a small house peeped up above some trees. He was at the door as soon as Woodville; and, lifting the latch, they both went in.

An old man and woman were sitting before the fire; but the sudden entrance of two men roused them in fear; and, when they saw who it was, and what they bore, all was eager hurry and lamentation. The inanimate body of Catherine Beauchamp, however, was speedily laid in the old chanter's bed, in the neighbouring chamber; and such simple means as first suggested themselves were employed to ascertain if

life were still within that fair and silent frame. But she lay calm and still as if asleep, with her features full of a sweet placidity, such as they had seldom worn in life.

"It is past!" said Richard of Woodville; "it is past! Poor girl! how has this happened? Ha! there is the mark of a grasp upon her throat!"

"See there, too!" cried Hal of Hadnock; and he pointed with his hand to where, upon the fine lawn that covered her bosom, was a faint red stain, half washed out by the water of the stream, as if blood had been spilt. No wound, however, was to be discovered; and while the two gentlemen stood and gazed, the old chanter's sister continued, ineffectually, to employ every effort to reawaken the inanimate frame, and the old man himself ran off to the Abbey to procure farther aid.

"Go into the other room, sirs—go into the other room," said the good dame, at length; "I will take off her wet clothes. 'Tis that keeps her from coming to."

Hal of Hadnock shook his head; for he could not see that pale countenance, those immovable lips, those sightless eyes, without feeling sure—too sure—that life had departed for ever. He would not say anything, however, to discourage the zeal of the poor woman; and he accordingly accompanied Richard of Woodville into the chamber which they had first entered, and stood with him in silent thought before the fire. Neither spoke; for the mind of each was busy with sad and dark inquiries, regarding the event which had just taken place; yet neither could arrive at anything like a conclusion. Was it her own act? was it accident? was it the deed of another? and if so, of whom? Such were the questions which both asked themselves. Both, too, entertained suspicions; but yet they did not like even to admit those suspicions to their own hearts, for how often does the first conclusion of guilt do injustice to the innocent! but while they were still in thought, the voice of the chanter's sister was heard exclaiming—

"Come hither, Master Richard!—come hither! See here!" and as they entered, she pointed to the poor girl's arm, which now lay uncovered on the bed-clothes, adding, "there is the grasp of a hand, clear enough! Look, all the fingers and the thumb!"

"Stay," said Hal of Hadnock; "that might be mine, Richard, or yours in raising her out of the stream."

"I took her by the other arm," answered Richard of Woodville.

"And I do not remember having touched her arm at all," said Hal of Hadnock, after thinking for a moment.

"Oh, no, sirs," cried the old woman; "that hand must have grasped her in life, else it would not have brought the blood to the skin. Hark! there are the people coming," and, in another minute, the good old Abbot, and four or five of his monks, ran in breathless and scared.

"Alas! alas! Richard, what is this?" cried the Abbot.

"A sad and dark affair, father," replied Richard of Woodville, while one of the monks, famed for his skill in leechcraft, advanced to the bed-side, and put his hand upon the heart; "I fear life is extinct."

The Abbot gazed at the monk as he knelt; but the good brother slowly waved his head, with a melancholy look, saying, "Yet leave me and the old woman alone with her."

"I will stay and aid," replied the Abbot. "I am her uncle."

All the rest withdrew; and many were the eager questions of the monks, as to how the accident had happened. Richard of Woodville told the tale simply as it was—the two shrieks that they had heard, the discovery of the body in the water, and its recovery from the stream.

"Ay, she screamed when she fell in, and when she first rose," said one of the monks; "drowning people always do."

Woodville made no reply; for he would not give his own suspicions to others; but Hal of Hadnock asked him, in a low voice, "Did you not hear the galloping of a horse, on the other side, as we came near?"

"I did," answered Richard, in the same tone; "I did, too plainly."

In about a quarter of an hour, the Abbot came forth, and all made way for him.

"What hope?" asked Woodville, looking into his uncle's face for speedier information.

"None!" replied the Abbot. "How has this chanced, my son? there are marks of violence."

The same tale was told over again; but this time Richard of Woodville added the fact of a horse's feet having been heard; and the Abbot mused profoundly.

"I will have the body carried down to the Abbey," he said, at length. "You, Richard, speed to my brother, and break the tidings there. Come down with him to the Abbey, and we will consult. Bring Dacre, too.

"Dacre has been gone more than two hours," answered Richard of Woodville; "but I will seek my uncle Philip," and he turned towards the door.

Hal of Hadnock stayed him for a moment, however, saying, "I must ride on, Richard. You know that my call hence admits of no delay. But let every one remark and remember, for this matter must be inquired into, that I heard and saw all that this good friend of mine did; the shrieks, the galloping of a horse, the body in the water. You shall have means of finding me, too, should it be needful; and now, my Lord Abbot, a sad good night. Farewell, Richard; you shall hear from me soon." Thus saying, he quitted the cottage, mounted his horse, and rode away at a quick pace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUSPICIONS.

Upon the borders of Hampshire and Sussex, but still within the former county, lies, as the reader probably knows, a large tract of land but little cultivated even now, and which, in the days whereof I speak, was covered either with scattered trees and copses or wild heath, having various paths and roads winding through it, which led now to a solitary village, with a patch of cultivated land round about it, now to a church or chapel in the wild, now travelled on through the hills, which are high and bare, to Winchester or Basingstoke. Deep sand occupies a great portion of the ground, through which it is well nigh impossible to construct a firm road; and the whole country is broken with wild and rapid undulations, of no great height or depth, but every variety of form, the resort of all those rare birds, which afforded so much interest and amusement to gentle White of Selbourne.

Through this rude and uncultivated tract, a little before the close of day, in the beginning of April 1413, two gentlemen clothed in deep mourning of the fashion of that day, rode slowly on. Both were very grave and silent; and, if the complexion of their thoughts was sad and solemn, the aspect of the scene at that hour was not calculated to lighten the heart, though it might arouse feelings of admiration. The sun hung

upon the edge of the sky; broad masses of cloud floated over the wide expanse of azure which stretched out above the wild heath; and their shadows, as they crossed the slanting rays, swept over the varied surface below, casting long lines of country into deep blue shade, while the rest shone in the cool pale evening sunshine of the yet unconfirmed spring. Each dell and pit, too, at that hour, was filled with the same sort of purple shadow: the braes and banks looked wilder and more strongly marked from the position of the sun; the occasional clumps of fir trees cut sharp and black upon the western sky; and everything was stern and grand and solemn.

Rising over one slope and descending another, by paths cut imperfectly through the heath and gorse, the travellers had ridden on for half an hour without speaking, when at length, at the bottom of a deep valley, where the sun could no longer be seen, and the shades of evening seemed already to have fallen, they stopped to let their horses drink in a large piece of water, sheltered by a thick copse, and gazed upon the reflection of the blue sky above and the clouds floating over it. As they moved on again, a large white bird started up from the reeds, and flew heavily away, with its snowy plumage strangely contrasting with the dark background of the wood and hill.

"'Tis like a spirit winging its way from earth," said Sir Henry Dacre, following the bird with his eyes. "Poor Catherine! Would that aught else had set thee free from the chain that bound thee to me, but death."

"Luckless girl, indeed!" replied Richard of Woodville; "from her infancy unfortunate! And yet men thought that the hand of Heaven had showered upon her its choicest gifts: beauty, wealth, kind friends, and a noble heart to love her, if she would but have welcomed it. But, alas! Harry, the crowning gift of all was wanting: a spirit that could use God's blessings aright."

"It was more the fault of others than her own," said Sir Harry Dacre, "that I do believe. Her mother made her what she was! 'Tis sad! 'tis very sad, Richard, that, at the period when we have no power to form ourselves, each weak fool who approaches us can give us some bad gift which we never can cast off."

"Like the evil fairies at a child's birth," answered Richard of Woodville; "and certainly her mother was a bad demon to her; but still, though I would not speak ill of those who

are gone, yet poor Kate received the gifts willingly enough, destructive as they were. Would to Heaven it had been otherwise; but others encouraged her in all that was wrong, as well as her mother. This man, Roydon, was no good counsellor for a lady's ear."

The brow of Sir Henry Dacre grew dark as night. "He is a scoundrel," he cried; "he is a scoundrel; and if ever he gives me the chance of having him at my lance's point, he or I shall go to that place where all men's actions are made clear.—Oh! that I knew the truth, Richard! Oh! that I knew the truth!"

"There is One who knows it," answered Richard of Woodville, "who never suffers foul deeds to rest in darkness. Trust to Him: and if this knave does but support his charge, perhaps your lance may be the avenging instrument of Heaven."

"May it be so," replied the knight; "but I doubt it, Richard. True, he has not shown himself a coward in the field; and yet I cannot but think that he is craven at heart. Saw you not how carefully his letter to Sir Philip was worded? how he insinuated more than he dared say? and, then, why did he not come?—A sickness, forsooth! The excuse of an idle schoolboy. He would not face me,—that is the truth. He fears me, Richard, and will not dare the test of battle."

"Well, that we shall soon see," answered his companion; "your messenger must be at my house, by this time, with his reply."

"I trust so," said Dacre, thoughtfully; "yet he will take time to write carefully, believe me. His will be no rash epistle, written in fiery anger at his cousin's death. No, no; it will be done as if a scrivener had dictated every word, and in a courtly hand. But whatever he does, mark me, he will leave the poison behind, and so calculate as to cast suspicion over me for life."

"But who suspects you, Dacre?" asked Richard of Woodville, with a smile; "not one honest man on earth. You are too well known, for doubts to light upon you. Does not Sir Philip, her own uncle, love you as a son? and can you let the idle words of a knave, like this, disturb your peace?"

"My peace, Richard!" said Sir Henry Dacre, sadly; "can a high and honest heart ever feel peace, so long as one doubt, one unrefuted charge, casts a cloud upon it? I would rather die a thousand deaths than have men point at me, and say, 'he was suspected of a foul crime against an innocent lady;'

and, besides, even those that I love best, those who hold me dearest, may often ask themselves, ‘ could it be true?’”

“Not a whit!” replied Woodville: “no one will ever ask such a thing. Like a wounded man, you think that every one will touch the spot, and feel the pain in fancy. Cast off such imaginations, Dacre; secure in your own honour, laugh suspicion to scorn, and trust to the noble and the true to do justice to those who are like themselves.”

“Would I could do so, Richard,” said the knight; “and it would be easy, too, did we not know that the wide world is so full of arrant knaves, and that amongst the knaves there are such hypocrites, that honesty has no touchstone whereby true metal can be really known from false; and men rightly doubt the value of each coin they take, so cunning are the counterfeits. Hypocrisy is a greater curse to mankind than wickedness; for it makes all virtue doubted, and fills the bosoms of the good with suspicion, from a knowledge of the feigning of the bad. Besides, amongst those who hold a middle course, neither plunging deep in the stream of vice and wrong, nor staying firmly on the shore of honour, how gladly every one attributes acts to others that may outdo the darkness of his own! No, no; suspicion never yet lighted on a name that ever was wholly pure again. All I ask is, to give me that man before me, let me cram the falsehood down his throat, at the sword’s point, and wring the truth from his dying lips, or let me die myself.”

“Well, we shall see what he replies,” answered Richard of Woodville, finding it useless to argue farther with him; “and if, as you suspect, he evades the question, what think you then to do?”

“To go with you to Burgundy,” answered Dacre; “for I shall be, then, one fitted well to take a part in civil broils—a right serviceable man, where danger is rifest, ever ready to lead the way in peril, having nor wife, nor relative, nor friend, nor hope, nor home, to make him feel the stroke that takes his life, more than the scratch of a sharp thorn that tears him as he passes through the wood.”

“But you will surely first return,” said Woodville, “to say farewell to my good uncle, and sweet Isabel?”

“I do not know,” replied Dacre. “Dear Isabel, she tried to cheer me; and I know would not for worlds suffer doubts of me to rest for an hour in her heart; and yet they will come and go, Richard, whether she will or not. Each time I take her hand she’ll think of Catherine; and though she’ll answer

boldly, 'it is false,' as often as suspicions rise, yet they will be remembered, and rest for ever as a shadow over our friendship."

"You do her wrong, Harry," answered his companion. "Your mind is sickly; and, as a man in a sore disease, you see all things through one pale mist. Isabel may often think of her who is no more, may grieve for her, and regret that she did not make life happier to herself and others, and that she met so early and so sad a death; but she will ever call her back to mind as one who wronged you, not as one wronged by you: and you may be happy yet."

He spoke gravely, and Sir Henry Dacre turned and gazed at him, as if for explanation of his words; but Richard said no more; and, riding on in silence, they soon after came to a point where the road began to rise, winding in slowly between two wooded hills, with a small streamlet flowing on by its side. The sun was sinking below the horizon, as they passed through a village, with the bright blacksmith's forge jutting out beyond the other buildings; and when at length they drew the rein before the gate of a tall house bosomed in trees, it was well nigh dark.

Several servants came instantly into the court; and, giving their horses to be taken to the stable, the two gentlemen entered the outer hall, and thence proceeded onwards to a room beyond, where they were immediately joined by a stout man, habited as a courier, who placed a letter in the hand of Sir Harry Dacre, without speaking.

"So thou art back, Martin," said the knight, while Richard of Woodville called for lights.

"Yes, noble sir," answered the servant; "but I have had to ride hard, for he kept me a long time; but that I don't wonder at."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Sir Henry; "why should he keep you long?"

"Because he wrote a long letter, sir," replied the man; "he might have waited till doomsday, if he had been in my place, and I in his."

"Did he look ill?" inquired the knight.

"Not he, sir," answered the servant; "he was out goss-hawking after larks when I arrived."

"The liar!" muttered Sir Henry Dacre; but at the same moment lights were brought in, and making the messenger a sign to retire, the knight opened the letter and read. Richard of Woodville stood by and watched him, while his fine

features, as he gazed intently upon the paper, assumed first a look of scorn, and then of anger; and at length he exclaimed, "As I thought, Richard!—as I thought! On my life, I must be an astrologer, and not know it, to have read this man's conduct to the letter, beforehand. Mark what he says: 'Sir Simeon of Roydon brings no charge against Sir Henry Dacre, and never has brought any; but holds him as good knight and true. He has, therefore, no cause of quarrel with the said knight, but, far from it, wishes him all prosperity; the which Sir Henry would have clearly seen, if he had read carefully the letter which Sir Simeon wrote to the good knight of Dunbury, and had not looked at it rashly. Therein Sir Simeon thought to do Sir Henry Dacre an act of love and courtesy, by pointing out — he himself nought doubting—what might breed doubts in the hearts of other men, regarding the manner of the death of the Lady Catherine Beauchamp, in order that the good knight might make such inquiries as would remove all suspicion. For this cause he marked what he had only learned by hear-say, that Sir Henry Dacre had, as unhappily often happened, a fierce quarrel with the Lady Catherine, about a gentleman, it would seem, calling himself Hal of Hadnock——' Curses upon him!" cried Dacre, breaking off.

"Nay, nay, you do him wrong," answered Richard of Woodville; "he sought but to serve you, as I will tell you anon, Harry. But read on. What says he more?"

"'That Sir Harry quitted the hall in bitter anger,'" continued Dacre, reading, "'and swearing he should go mad with the lady's conduct——' Did I say so?"

Woodville nodded his head, and his friend proceeded: "'That the said Sir Henry, though his house is distant but seven miles, did not reach his own door till the hour of nine, and that the lady came by her death between seven and eight, or thereabout; that Sir Henry's hand was torn when he reached his house; and that there was a stain of blood upon the lady's throat; that there were marks of horses' feet on the opposite side of the river, and across the moor towards Sir Henry's dwelling; and that he himself was seen of many persons wandering about near Abbot's Ann and Dunbury, till dark that night; all of which points Sir Simeon of Roydon doubted not, in any way, could be easily explained by Sir Henry Dacre, if true—but which, perchance, were untrue he, Sir Simeon, having heard them merely from vague report' and common fame!' Some true, some false," cried Dacre.

"I did tear my hand, opening the gate by Clatford mill. I did wander about, with a heart on fire, and a brain all whirling, at being made wretched by another's fault; but I was far from the village, far from Abbey and Hall, before the sun went down; for I saw him set from Weyhill.—Ah! poisonous snake! He stings and glides away from the heel that would crush him. Hear how he ends: 'For his own part, Sir Simeon of Roydon is right well convinced that Sir Henry Dacre is pure and free of all share in the lady's death; otherwise that knight might be full sure he would be the first to call him to the lists, in vengeance of his cousin's death.' The scoundrel coward! But how is this, Richard? He must have spies in our houses—at our hearths. How else did he gain such tidings? Who told him of the quarrel between that hapless girl and me? He was gone long before, I think?"

"Ay, but his servants stayed," replied Woodville; "and there was one in the hall when you returned; that black-looking, silent man. Yet he must have some other means of information, too; else how did he know your hand was torn?"

"I cannot say," answered Dacre, thoughtfully. "By heaven! he will plant suspicion in my heart, too, and make me doubt the long-tried, faithful fellows I have with me." And he cast himself gloomily on a seat, and pondered in silence.

The moment after, there was a sound of horses' feet passing along before the house, and Richard of Woodville turned and listened, saying, "Here is some new messenger. Were it any of my own people, they would come to the other gate."

After some talking in the hall without, an attendant opened the door, and informed his young master that there was a person without who desired to see him. "He comes from Westminster," added the man, "and will give neither message nor letters to any but yourself, sir."

"Let him come in!" answered Richard of Woodville; and a personage was called forward, habited somewhat differently from any of those whom we have already had occasion to describe. He was dressed in what is called a tabard; but it must not be supposed, from that circumstance, that he bore the office of either herald or pursuivant, for many other classes retained that part of the ancient dress, and it was officially worn by the squires, and many of the inferior attend-

ants of kings and sovereign princes, sometimes over armour, sometimes without. In particular cases, the tabard was embroidered either with the arms of the lord whom the bearer served, or with his own, as a sort of coat of arms; but was frequently, especially with persons of somewhat low degree, perfectly unornamented, and formed of a fine cloth of a uniform colour. Such was the case with the man who now appeared —his loose, short gown, with wide sleeves, being of a bright pink hue. The linen collar of his shirt fell over it; and the part of his dress left exposed below the knee, showed nothing but the riding boots of untanned leather, drawn up to their full extent. In person, he was a short, thin young man, with a shrewd and merry countenance. His hair was cut short round the whole head, but left thick, notwithstanding, so as to resemble a fur cap, and his long arms reached his knees. Without uttering a word, he advanced towards Richard of Woodville, who had taken a step forward to receive him, and drawing a packet from the bosom of his tabard, he placed it in the gentleman's hand.

"From Hal of Hadnock, I suspect?" said Woodville, looking at him closely.

"Nay, I know not," replied the messenger; "from Hal, certainly; yet no more Hal of Hadnock, than of Monmouth, or Westminster, or any other town of England or Wales. Read, and you will see."

Richard of Woodville tore open the outer cover, and took forth several broad letters, tied and sealed. The first he opened, and drawing near the light, perused its contents attentively.

"Hal of Hadnock," so it ran, "to Richard of Woodville, greeting. Good service requires good service, and honour, honour. Thus you shall find, my comrade of the way, that I have not forgotten you, though matters of much moment and some grief have delayed a promise, not put it out of mind. You, too, have doubtless had much cause for thought and sorrow, and may, perchance, have yet affairs to keep you in the realms of England; which being the case, I do not require that you should lay aside things of weight, to bear the enclosed to the noble Duke of Burgundy, or his son, and to the faithful servant of this crown, Sir Philip Morgan, now at the court of Burgundy; but the letter addressed to Sir John Grey, at Ghent, is of some importance to himself, and should find his hands as speedily as may be. If, therefore, by any chance, you be minded to stay in England more than four-

teen days from the receipt of these, return that packet by the bearer, one Edward Dyram. But, if you be ready to cross the seas ere then, keep the messenger with you in your company, as I believe him to be faithful and true, and skilled in many things; and he knoweth my mind towards you, which is good. Neither be offended at speech or jest of his, for he hath a licence not easily bridled; but so long as he useth his tongue for his own conceit, so long will he use his knowledge for a friend or master. I give him to you; treat him well till you return him to me again; and if there be aught else that can serve you or do you grace, seek me at Westminster, where you will find a friend in HENRY."

Richard of Woodville pondered, but testified no surprise; and, after a moment's thought, put the letter in the hand of Sir Henry Dacre, who read it through, with more apparent wonder than his friend had expressed. "And who is this?" he asked, when he had done. "He signs himself, Henry. Can it be the Prince?"

"The Prince that was, the King that is," replied Woodville, giving him a sign to say no more before the messenger. "And so, my friend, you are to be my companion over sea?" he added, turning to the latter.

"That is as you will, not as I will," replied the man; "if you are fool enough to quit England in a fortnight, when you can stay a month, I am to go with you; if you are wise enough to stay, I am wise enough to go alone."

"Ten days, I hope, at farthest, shall see my foot on other shores," answered Woodville; "and pray, Master Edward Dyram, what may be your capacity, quality, or degree? for 'tis fit that I should know who it is goes with me."

"Ned Dyram, fair sir, by your leave," replied the messenger; "'tis so long since I lost the last half of my first name, that I know it not when I meet it; and I should as much expect my mother's ass to answer me, if I called him Edward, as I should answer to it myself. Then, as to my capacity, it is large enough to hold any man's secrets without spilling them by the way, or to contain the knowledge of a knight, a baron, and squire, besides a clerk's and my own, without running over. My chief quality is to tell truth when I like it, and other men do not; and my degree has never been taken yet, though I lived long enough with a doctor of Oxford to have caught that sickness, had it been infectious."

"I fear me, Ned Dyram," said Richard of Woodville,

smiling, "I shall lose much time with you, in getting crooked answers to plain questions; but if you have puzzled your own brains with logic, puzzle not mine."

"Well, well, sir," answered the other, "I will be brief, for I am hungry, and you are tired. I am the son of a Franklin, who broke his heart to make me a clerk. I had, however, no gift for singing, and turned my wits to other things. I can do what men can generally do, and sometimes better than they can. I have broken a man's head one day, and healed it the next; for I have handled a quarter-staff and served a leech. I can cast nativities, and draw a horoscope; I can make a horse-shoe, and sharpen a sword; I can write court hand, and speak more tongues than my own; I can cook my own dinner, when need be, and bake or brew, if the sutler or the tapster should fail me."

"A goodly list of qualities, indeed," said Richard of Woodville; "and though my household is not the most princely, we will find you an office, Ned Dyram, which you must exercise with discretion; and now, as you are hungry, get you gone to my people, who will stop that evil. We have supped."

The messenger withdrew; and Sir Henry Dacre returned the letter, which he still held in his hand, to Woodville, saying, "So this was the Prince? the more cruel in him to sport with the peace of his father's subjects."

"Not so, Dacre," replied his friend. "I told you I could explain his conduct; and it is but justice to him to do so; for he intended to be kind, not cruel."

Dacre shook his head gloomily.

"Well, you shall hear," continued Woodville. "When I first brought him to my uncle's gate, I knew not who he was; but he had scarcely entered the hall, when I remembered him. I kept my own counsel, however, and said nothing; but when he sought his room, I went with him as you saw, and there for a whole hour we spoke of those we had left below. I told him nothing, Harry; for his quick eye had gleaned the truth wherever it turned; and I had only to set him right on some things regarding the past. He knew you by name, and took interest in your fate as well as mine. I would fain tell you all; but in the mood in which you are, I fear that I may pain you."

"Speak, Dick, speak," answered the knight; "have we not been as brothers since our boyhood, that you may not give me all your thoughts freely? Say all you have to say.

Keep nought behind, if you love me; for I have grown as suspicious as the rest, and shall doubt if I see you hesitate."

"Well, at all risks," said Richard of Woodville, "it is better to give you some pain, perhaps, than to leave you with your present thoughts. We talked, then, first of myself and Mary Markham, and then of you and Catherine. He saw you loved her not."

"'Twas her own fault," cried Dacre: "she crushed out love that might once have been deep and true."

"I told him so," replied Woodville; "and he asked, why, as you both clearly wished the bond that bound you to each other loosed, you did not apply to the Church and the law to break it? I said, what perhaps had better not been said, but yet what I believed, that, if you proposed it, she would not consent, for that she loved to keep you as a captive, if not by love's chains, by any other. He fancied, Harry, that, if that incomplete union were dissolved, you might be happy with another—ay, with Isabel."

"Ha!" exclaimed Dacre; "ha! Have I been so careless of my looks that a mere stranger should—" and he bent down his brow upon his hands, and remained for a moment silent. Then looking up, he added, "Well, Richard, I have been a fool; but was it possible to stand between a desert and a paradise, and not regret that I could never pass the boundary; to look into a scene of joy and peace, and not long to rest the weary heart, and cool the aching brow in the calm groves, and pleasant glades before me? Who would compare those two beings, and not choose between them, in spite of fate? But what said he more?"

"He thought you might be happy," answered Woodville, "and that the only barrier was one that he might prompt Catherine to remove herself. For that object he humoured her caprice, and played with her light vanity. He told me that he would; and I saw that he did so; for his was no heart to be suddenly made captive by one such as Catherine Beauchamp. Besides, it was clear, his words, half sweet, half sour, were all aimed at that end; for ever and anon, when his tone was full of courteous gallantry, some sharp jest would break through, as if he could not keep down the somewhat scornful thoughts with which her idle vanity moved him."

"Then I did him wrong," answered Dacre; "for had he succeeded, and led her to propose of her own will that our betrothing should be annulled, no boon on all the earth could

have been equal to that blessing. It has turned out sadly; yet I will not blame him; for who can tell when he draws a bowstring in the dark where the shaft may fall? But say, Richard, was he aware you knew his station?"

"I never told him," replied his friend; "but I think that he divined. You see, in his letter, that he gives no explanation. But listen, Harry; will it not be better—now that we have spoken freely on this theme—will it not be better, I say, for you to return home, let the first memory of these dark days pass away, and seek for happiness with one who may well make up for all that you have suffered in the past."

"What!" cried Dacre, "with this stain upon my name? Oh, no! that dream of joy is gone. No, no, my only course is to forget that there is such a thing as love on earth, or to think with your friend Chaucer's lay, that—

> '— Love ne is in yonge folke but rage,
> And is in olde folke a grete dotage,
> Who most it usith, he most shal enpaire
> For thereof cometh disese and hevinesse
> So sorrow and care, and many a grete sicknesse,
> Despite, debate, and angre, and envie,
> Depraving shame, untrust, and jelousie,
> Pride, mischefe, povertie, and wodeness.'"

"'Tis the song of the cuckoo, Harry," replied Woodville; "but this sad humour, built upon a baseless dream, will pass away when you find that the suspicions which you now fancy in every one's heart, live but in your own imagination; and then you will answer with the nightingale—

> 'That evirmore Love his servauntes amendeth,
> And from all evil tachis them defendeth;'

but Time must do his own work; and till then, argument is of no avail. Yet I would fain not have you lose bright days with me in foreign lands. Happy were I if I could stay like you in hope, and lead the pleasant summer life, beneath the lightsome looks of her whom I love best. Think of it, Harry, think of it; and do not rashly judge that you see clear till you have wiped the dust out of your eyes."

Dacre shook his head, and answered, "I will to rest, Richard, such as I can find; for now that I have got this craven's reply, I have no further business here till I join you again upon our pilgrimage. I will away to-morrow, to prepare; but we shall meet before I go. I know my way."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CORONATION.

Five days after the events related in the last chapter, Richard of Woodville, leaving armourers and tailors busy in his house at Meon, rode away for London, accompanied by two yeomen, a page, and Ned Dyram, whose talents had not been long in displaying themselves in the service of his new master. He had instructed the tailors; he had assisted the armourers; he had aided to choose the horses; he had drawn figures for fresh pallettes and pauldrons; and he had with his own hand manufactured a superb bridle and bit, ornamented with gilt steel plates; jesting, laughing, talking, all the while, and overcoming the obstinacy and the vanity of the old artificers, who would fain have equipped the young gentleman who employed them, in the fashions of the early part of the last reign, all new inventions in those days travelling slowly from the capital to the country. Ned Dyram, however, had been in many lands, and had accumulated, in a head which possessed extraordinary powers both of observation and memory, an enormous quantity of patterns and designs of everything new or strange, which he had seen; and sometimes with a laugh, sometimes with an argument, he drove those who were inclined to resist all innovation, to adopt his proposed improvements greatly against their will. But though his tongue occasionally ran fast, and he seemed to take a pleasure occasionally in confounding his slower opponents with a torrent of words, yet on all subjects but those immediately before him, he kept his own counsel, and not one of the servants of the house, when he set out with Woodville for London, was aware of who or what he was, whence he came, or where he had gained so much knowledge.

The first day's journey was a long one, and Richard of Woodville and his train were not many miles from London, when they again set forth early on the following morning, so that it was not yet noon, on the ninth of April, when they approached the city of Westminster, along the banks of the Thames.

Winding in and out, through fields and hedge-rows, where now are houses, manufactories, and prisons, with the soft air of Spring breathing upon them, and the scent of the

early cowslips, for which that neighbourhood was once famous, rising up and filling the whole air, they came on, now catching, now losing, the view of the large heavy abbey church of Westminster, and its yet unfinished towers of the same height as the main building, while rising tall above it, appeared the belfry of St. Stephen's chapel, with its peaked roof, open at the sides, displaying part of the three enormous bells, one of which was said (falsely) to weigh thirty thousand pounds. The top of two other towers might also be seen, from time to time, over the trees, and also part of the buildings of the monastery adjoining the Abbey; but these were soon lost, as the lane which the travellers were following wound round under the west side of Tote Hill, a gentle elevation covered with greensward, and ornamented with clumps of oak, and beech, and fir, amidst which might be discovered, here and there, some large stone houses, richly ornamented with sculpture, and surrounded with their own gardens. The lanes, the paths, the fields, were filled with groups of people in their holiday costume, all flocking towards Westminster; and what with the warm sunshine, the greenness of the grass, the tender verdure of the young foliage, and the gay dresses of the people, the whole scene was as bright and lively as it is possible to conceive. At the same time, the loud bells of St. Stephen's began to ring with the merriest tones they could produce, and a distant "Hurrah!" came upon the wind.

"Now, Ned, which is the way?" asked Richard of Woodville, calling up his new attendant to his side, as they came to a spot where the lane divided into two branches, one taking the right hand side of the hill, and one the left. "This seems the nearest," he continued, pointing down the former; "but I know nought of the city."

"The nearest may prove the farthest," replied Ned Dyram, riding up, "as it often does, my master. That is the shortest, good sooth! but they call the shortest often the fool's way; and we might be made to look like fools, if we took it—for though it leads round to the end of St. Stephen's Lane, methinks that to-day none will be admitted to the palace-court by that gate, as it is the King's coronation morning."

"Indeed!" said Woodville; "I knew not that it was so."

"Nor I, either," answered Ned; "but I know it now."

"And how, pray?" asked his new master.

"By every sight and sound," replied Ned Dyram. "By

that girl's pink coats—by that good man's blue cloak—by the bells ringing—by the people running—by the hurrah we heard just now. I ever put all I hear and see together—for a man who only sees one thing at once, will never know what time he is living in."

"Then we had better turn to the left," said Woodville, not caring to hear more of his homily. "Of course, if this be the coronation day, I shall not get speech of the King till to-morrow; but we may as well see what is going on."

"To the left will lead you right," replied his quibbling companion; "that is to say, to the great gate before the palace court; and then we shall discover whether the King will speak with you or not. Each Prince has his own manners, and ours has changed so boldly in one day, that no one can judge from that which the lad did, what the man will do."

"Has he changed much, then?" asked Woodville, riding on; "it must have been sudden, indeed, if you had time to see it ere you left him."

"Ay, has he!" answered Dyram; "the very day of his father's death he put on, not the robes of royalty, but the heart; and those who were his comrades before, gave place to other men. They who counted much upon his love, found a cold face; and they who looked for hate, met with nought but grace."

"Then, perhaps, my reception may not be very warm," said Woodville, thoughtfully.

"You may judge yourself, better than I can, master mine," replied Ned Dyram. "Did you ever sit with him in the tavern, drinking quarts of wine?"

"No," answered Richard of Woodville, smiling.

"Then you shall be free of his table," said Ned. "Did you ever shoot deer with him, by moonlight?"

"Never," was his master's reply.

"Then you may chance to taste his venison," rejoined the man. "Did you ever brawl, swear, and break heads for him, or with him?"

"No, truly," said the young gentleman; "I fought under him with the army in Wales, when he and I were both but boys; and I led him on his way one dark night, two days before his father died; but that is all I know of him."

"Then, perchance, you may enter into his council," answered Dyram; "for, now that he is royal, he thinks

royally, and he judges man for himself, not with the eyes of others."

"As all kings should," said Richard of Woodville.

"And few kings do," rejoined Ned. "I was not so lucky; but many a mad prank have I seen during the last year; and though he knows, and Heaven knows, I never prompted what others did, yet I was one of the old garments he cast off, as soon as he put on the new ones. I fared better than the rest, indeed, because I sometimes had told him a rough truth; and trust I shall fare better still, if I do his bidding."

"And what may be his bidding?" asked Richard of Woodville—"for, doubtless, he gave you one, when he sent you to me."

"He bade me live well, and forget former days, as he had forgotten them," replied Ned Dyram; "and he bade me serve you well, master, if you took me with you; so you have no cause to think ill of the counsel that he gave me in your case. But here we are, master mine; and a goodly sight it is to see."

As he spoke, they turned into the wide street, or rather road, which led from the village of Charing to the gates of the palace at Westminster; and a gay and beautiful scene it certainly presented, whichever side the eye turned. To the north was seen the old gothic building (destroyed in the reign of Edward VI.) where the royal falcons were kept, and called from that circumstance the Mew; while, a little in advance, upon a spot slightly elevated, stood the beautiful stone cross, one of the monuments of undying regard, erected in the village of Charing, by King Edward the First; to the left appeared the buttery and lodge, and other offices of the hospital and convent of St. James's, forming together a large pile of buildings, with gates and arches cutting each other in somewhat strange confusion—while the higher stories, supported by corbels, overhung the lower. The effect of the whole, however, massed together by the distance, was grand and striking; while the trees of the fields, then belonging to the nunnery, and afterwards formed into a park, broke the harsher lines, and marked the distances down the course of the wide road.

A little nearer, but on the opposite side of the way, with gardens and stairs extending to the river, was the palace, or lodging of the Kings of Scotland. The edifice has been destroyed—but the ground has still retained the name which

it then bore; and many years had not elapsed, at the time I speak of, since that mansion had been inhabited by the monarchs of the northern part of this island, when they came to take their seats in Parliament, in right of their English feofs. Gardens succeeded, till appeared, somewhat projecting beyond the line of road, the old stern building which had once been the property of Hubert de Burg, Earl of Kent, more like a fortress than a dwelling, though its gloomy aspect was relieved by a light and beautiful chapel, lately built on the side nearest to Westminster, by one of the Archbishops of York.

Several smaller edifices, sometimes constructed of brick, sometimes of grey stone, were seen on the right and left, all in that peculiar style of architecture so much better fitted to the climate of northern Europe, and the character of her people, than the light and graceful buildings of the Greeks, which we imitate in the present day, generally with such heavy impotence; and still between all appeared the green branches of oaks, and beeches, and fields, and gardens, blending the city and the country together.

Up the long vista, thus presented, were visible thousands of groups, on horseback and on foot, decked out in gay and glittering colours: and as brilliant a scene displayed itself to the south, in the wide court before the palace, surrounding which appeared the venerable Abbey, the vast Hall, the long line of the royal dwelling, the monastery, the chapel of St. Stephen, with its tall belfry, and many another tower and lofty archway, and the old church of St. Margaret, built about a century and a half before, together with the lofty yet heavy buildings of the Woolstaple, and the row of arches underneath. Banners and pennons fluttering in the wind; long gowns of monks and secular clergymen; tabards and mantles of every hue under the sun; the robes and headdresses of the ladies and their women, and the gorgeous trappings of the horses, catching the light as they moved hither and thither, rendered the line from the Eleanor cross to the palace one living rainbow; while the river, flowing gently on upon the east, was covered with boats, all tricked out with streamers and fluttering ribbons. Even the grave, the old, and those dedicated to seclusion and serious thought, seemed to have come forth for this one day; and, amongst the crowd, might be distinguished more than one of the long, grey, black, or white gowns, with the coif and veil which marked the nun. All seemed gay, however; and nothing

was heard but laughter, merriment, gay jests, the ringing of the bells, the sounding of clarions, and, every now and then, the deep tone of the organ, through the open windows of the Abbey, or a wild burst of martial music from the lesser court of the palace.

Habited in black, as mourning for his unhappy cousin, Richard of Woodville felt himself hardly fitted for so gay a scene; but his good mien and courteous carriage gained him many a civil word as he moved along, or perchance some shrewd jest, as the frank simplicity of those days allowed.

"Where is the black man going?" cried a pert London apprentice; "he must be chief mourner for the dead king."

"Nay, he is fair enough to look upon, Tom," replied a pretty girl by his side. "You would give much to be as fair."

"Take care of my toes, master," exclaimed a stout citizen; "your horse is mettlesome."

"He shall not hurt you, good sir," replied Woodville.

"Let me hold by your leg, sir squire," said a woman near, "so shall I have a stout prop."

"Blessings on his fair, good-natured face!" cried an old woman; "he has lost his lady, I will wager my life."

"You have not much there to lose, good mother," answered a man behind her.

"Well, he will soon find another lady," rejoined a buxom dame, who seemed of the same party, "if he takes those eyes to court."

"Out on it, master!" exclaimed a man who had been amusing the people round him by bad jokes; "is your horse a cut-purse? He had his nose in my pouch."

"Where he found nothing, I dare say," answered Woodville; and in the midst of the peal of laughter which followed from the easily moved multitude, he made his way forward to the gates, where he was stopped by a wooden barrier drawn across and guarded by a large posse of the royal attendants, habited in their coats of ceremony.

"What now?—what now?" asked one of the jacks of office, with a large mace in his hand, as Woodville rode up; "you can have no entrance here, sir squire, if you be not of the King's house, or have not an order from one of his lords. The court is crowded already. The King will not have room to pass back."

Before his master could answer, however, Ned Dyram pushed forward his horse, and addressed the porter, saying,

in a tone of authority, "Up with the barrier, Master Robert Nesenham. 'Tis a friend of the King's, for whom he sent me—Master Richard of Woodville—you know the name."

"That's another affair, Ned," replied the other; "but let me see, are not you on the list of those who must not come to court?"

"Not I," replied Ned Dyram; "or if I be, you have put me on yourself, Robin; 'tis but the other day I left his Grace upon this errand."

"Well, come in, if it be so, varlet," replied the porter, lifting the barrier; "but if you come forbidden, the pillory and your ears will be acquainted. How many men of you are there?—Stand back, fellows, or I will break your pates. See, Tim, there is a fellow slipping through! Drive him back—give him a throw—cast him over—break his neck—five of you, that is all?—stand back, fellows, or you shall into limbo."

While the good man strove with the crowd without, who all struggled manfully to push through the barrier when it was open, Richard of Woodville and his followers made their way on into the court; and, dismounting from his horse in the more open space which it afforded, he advanced towards the passage which was kept clear by the royal officers, between the door of the great Hall and the Abbey. At first he was placed near a stout man, dressed as a wealthy citizen; and he inquired of him how long the King had been in the church.

"Three parts of an hour," replied the other; "did you not hear the shout and the bells begin to ring? Oh, it was a grand sight! There was——" but the rest of what he said was drowned by the noise around, aided by a loud flourish of trumpets from the Hall.

The crowd, however, was constantly changing, and swaying to and fro; and Woodville soon found himself separated from the man to whom he had spoken, by two or three of the secular clergy of the city, and a somewhat coquettish-looking nun, who wore over her grey gown a blue ribbon and a silver cross.

She turned round and looked at him with her veil up, showing a very pretty face, and a pair of bright blue eyes. A fat monk was behind, and a man dressed as a scrivener; but all were intent upon watching the door of the Abbey, as if they expected the royal procession soon to re-appear; and Woodville turned his eyes thither also. The next moment

he heard a voice pronounce his own name, and then add, "Beware of Simeon of Roydon; and let not Henry Dacre fight with him."

Richard turned sharply round, and gazed at those behind him; but he saw no face that he knew, but those of Ned Dyram and one of his own men. The rest of the group in his immediate neighbourhood was composed of two monks, another nun, a doctor of divinity in his cope, a tall man in a surcoat of arms, and two elderly ladies with portentous head-dresses, a full half yard broad and two feet high.

It was a woman's voice, however, that he had heard, and he inquired at once of the nearest woman, "Did you speak, lady?"

"To be sure I did," answered the good dame, in a sharp tone; "I asked my brother what the hour is. No offence in that, sir, I suppose?"

"Oh, none, assuredly," replied Richard of Woodville; "but I thought you mentioned my name."

"I do not know it, young sir," replied the lady; "come away, brother, the squire is saucy;" and she and her party moved on, making a complete change in the disposition of the group.

In vain Richard of Woodville looked beyond the little circle in which they stood; he could see no face that he knew; and at length, turning to Ned Dyram, he inquired if he had heard any one mention his name.

"That good dame, or some one near her certainly did," replied the man; "but I could not see exactly who it was. It might be the other woman."

"Was she old, too?" demanded Woodville.

"Too old for your wife, and too young for your mother," answered Ned—"somewhat on the touch of forty years."

As he spoke, there was a loud "hurrah!" from the ground adjacent to the Abbey door; a true, hearty, English shout, such as no other nation on the earth can give; and the royal procession was seen returning. All pressed as near as they could; and Richard of Woodville gained a place in front, where he waited calmly, uncovered, for the passing of the King.

On came the train, bishops and abbots, priests and nobles, the pages, the knights, the bearers of the royal emblems; but all eyes were turned to one person, as—with a step, not haughty, but calm and firm, such as might well accord with a heart fixed and confident to keep the solemn vows so

lately made, in scrupulous fidelity; with a brow elevated by high and noble purposes, more than by the splendour of the crown it bore; and with an eye lightening with genius and soul—Henry of Monmouth returned towards his palace, amidst the gratulating acclamations of his people.

Richard of Woodville saw Hal of Hadnock in the whole bearing of the monarch, as he had seen the Prince in the bearing of Hal of Hadnock, and he murmured to himself, "He is the same. 'Tis but the dress is altered, either in mind or body. Excluded from the tasks of royalty, he assumed a less noble guise; but still the man was the same."

As he thus thought, the King passed before him, looking to right and left upon the long lines of people that bordered his way, though, marching in his state, he distinguished no one by word or gesture. His eyes, indeed, fixed firmly for an instant upon Richard of Woodville, and a slight smile passed over his lip; but he went on without farther notice; and the young gentleman turned, as soon as he had gone by, thinking, "I will seek some inn, and come to the palace to-morrow. To-day, it is in vain."

The pressure of the multitude, however, prevented him from moving for some time, and he was forced to remain till the whole of the procession had gone by. He then made his way out of the crowd, which gradually became less compact, though few retired altogether, the greater number waiting either to discuss the events of the day, or to see if any other amusements would be afforded to the people; but it was some time before the young gentleman could find his horses, for the movements of the people had forced them from the place where they had been left. Just as he was, at length, putting his foot in the stirrup, Ned Dyram pulled his sleeve, saying, "There is a King's page, my master, looking for some one in the crowd. Always give yourself a chance. It may be you he seeks."

"I think not," replied Richard of Woodville; "but you can join him, and inquire, if you will."

The man instantly ran off at full speed; and, though soon forced to slacken his pace amongst the people, he in the end reached the page, and asked for whom he was looking.

"A gentleman in black," replied the boy, "named Richard of Woodville."

"Then there he is," answered Ned, pointing with his hand to where his master stood; and, followed by the page, he walked quickly to the spot.

"If your name be Richard of Woodville, sir," said the boy, "the King will see you now, while he is putting off his heavy robes and taking some repose."

"I follow, young sir," replied Woodville; and, accompanying the page, he turned towards the palace, while Ned Dyram, after a moment's hesitation, pursued the same course as his master, "in order," as he said mentally, "always to give himself a chance."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAY OF FESTIVAL.

Crossing through the great Hall of the palace of Westminster, where so many a varied scene has been enacted in the course of English history, where joy and sorrow, mirth, merriment, pageantry, fear, despair, and the words of death, have passed for well nigh a thousand years, and do pass still, Richard of Woodville followed the page amidst tables and benches, serving-men, servers, guards, and ushers, till they reached a small door at the left angle, which, when opened, displayed the first steps of a small stone staircase. Up these they took their way, and then, through a corridor thronged with attendants, past the open door of a large room on the right, in which mitres and robes, crosses and swords of state, met the young gentleman's eye, to a door at the end, which the page opened. Within was a small antechamber containing several squires and pages in their tabards, waiting either in silence, or at most talking to each other in whispers. They made way for their comrade, and the gentleman he brought with him, to pass, and, approaching an opposite door, the boy knocked. No one answered; but the door was immediately opened; and Richard of Woodville was ushered into a bedchamber, where, seated in a large chair, he found the King, attended by two men dressed in their habits of state. One of these had just given the visitor admission; but the other was engaged in pulling off the boots in which the monarch had walked to and from the Abbey, and in placing a pair of embroidered shoes upon his feet instead.

"Welcome, Richard of Woodville," said Henry, as soon as he beheld him; "so you have come to see Hal of Hadnock before you depart?"

"I have come to see my gracious Sovereign, Sire," replied Woodville, advancing, and bending the knee to kiss his hand, "and to wish him health and long life to wear his crown, for his own honour and the happiness of his people."

"Nay, rise, Richard, rise," said Henry, smiling kindly; "no court ceremonies here. And I will tell you, my good friend, that I do really believe, there is not one of all those who have shouted on my path to-day, or sworn to support my throne, who more sincerely wishes my prosperity than yourself. But say, did you guess, that Hal of Hadnock was the Prince of Wales?"

"I knew it, Sire," replied Woodville, "from the first moment you entered my uncle's hall. I had served under your Grace's command in Wales."

"I suspected as much," replied the monarch, "from some words you let fall."

"I do beseech you, Sire, to pardon me," continued Richard, "if I judged my duty wrongly; but I thought that so long as it was not your pleasure to give yourself your own state, it was my part, to know you only as you seemed."

"And you did right, my friend," replied the King; "but were you not tempted to breathe the secret to any one—not even to Mary Markham?"

"To no one, Sire," answered Woodville, boldly; "not for my right hand, would I have said one word to the best friend I had."

"You are wise and faithful, Richard of Woodville," said Henry, gravely; "God send me many such."

"Here is the other mantle, Sire," said the attendant who was dressing him, "will you permit me to unclasp that?"

Henry rose, and the man disengaged the royal mantle from his shoulders, replacing it with one less heavy, while the King continued his conversation with Woodville, after a momentary interruption, repeating, "God send me many such; for if I judge rightly, I shall have need of strong arms, and wise heads, and noble hearts about me. Nor shall I fail to call for yours when I have need, my friend."

"Ah, Sire," answered Woodville, with a smile, "as far as a true heart and a strong arm may go, I can, perhaps, serve you; but for wise heads, I fear you must look elsewhere. I am but a singer of songs, you know, and a lover of old ballads."

"Like myself, Richard," replied Henry; "but none the worse for that. I know not why, but I always doubt the man

that is not fond of music. 'Tis, perhaps, that I love it so well myself, that I cannot but think he who does not has some discordant principle in his heart that jars with sweet sounds. 'Tis to me a great refreshment also; and when I have been sad or tired with all this world's business, when my thoughts have grown misty, or my brain turned giddy, I have sat me down to the organ and played for a few moments till all has become clear again; and I have risen as a man does from a calm sleep. As for poesy, indeed, I love it well enough, but I am no poet:—and yet I think that a truly great poet is more powerful, and has a wider empire, than a king. We monarchs rule men's bodies while we live; but their minds are beyond that sceptre, and death ends all our power. The poet rules their hearts, moulds their minds to his will, and stretches his arm over the wide future. He arrays the thoughts of countless multitudes for battle on the grand field of the world, and extends his empire to the end of time. Look at Homer,—has not the song of the blind Greek its influence yet? and so shall the verse of Chaucer be heard in years to come, long after the brow they have this day crowned shall have mouldered in the grave."

The thoughts which he had himself called up, seemed to take entire possession of the King, and he remained gazing in deep meditation for a few minutes upon the glittering emblems of royalty which lay upon the table before him, while Richard of Woodville stood silent by his side, not venturing to interrupt his reverie.

"Well, Richard," continued the King, at length rousing himself, "so you go to Burgundy? but hold yourself ready to join me when I have need."

"I am always ready, now or henceforward, Sire," answered the young gentleman, "to serve you with the best of my poor ability; and the day will be a happy one that calls me to you. I only go to seek honour in another land, because I had so resolved before I met your Highness, and because you yourself pronounced it best for me."

"And so I think it still," replied Henry. "I would myself advance you, Woodville, but for two reasons; first, I find every office near my person filled with old and faithful servants of the crown; and, as they fall vacant, I would place in them men who have themselves won renown. Next, I think it better that your own arm and your own judgment should be your prop, rather than a King's favour; and, as yet, there is here no opportunity. Besides, there are many

other reasons why you will do well to go, in which I have not forgotten your own best interests. But keep yourself clear of long engagement to a foreign Prince, lest your own should need you."

"That I most assuredly will, Sire," answered Richard of Woodville. "I go but to take service as a volunteer, holding myself free to quit it when I see meet. I ask no pay from any one; and if I gain honour or reward, it shall be for what I have done, not for what I am to do."

"You are right, you are right," said Henry; "but have you anything to ask of me?"

"Nothing, Sire," replied the young gentleman. "I did but wish to pay reverence to your state, and thank you for the gracious letters you have given me, before I went;" and he took a step back as if to retire. But Henry made a sign, saying—

"Stop! yet a moment; I have something to ask you.—Lay the gloves down there, Surtis. Tighten this point a little, and then retire with Baynard."

The attendants did as they were bid; and Henry then inquired, "What of Sir Henry Dacre, and of that dark evening's work at which we were present?"

"Dacre goes with me, Sire," replied Richard of Woodville.

"Ha!" exclaimed the King; "then were we wrong in thinking he loved the other?"

"Not so," answered Woodville; "'tis a sad tale, Sire. He does love Isabel, I am sure—has long loved her, though struggling hard against such thoughts. But, as if to mar his whole happiness, that scoundrel, Roydon, whom you saw, when informed of poor Kate's death, wrote, though he did not come, raising doubts as to whether her fate had been accidental."

"Doubts!" cried the King. "Do you entertain no doubts, Richard?"

"Many, Sire," answered the young gentleman; "but I never mention doubts that I cannot justify by proof, and will not support with my arm. But he did more; he pointed suspicion at one he knew too well to be innocent. He called up some accidental circumstances affecting Dacre—not as charges, indeed, but as matters of inquiry; made the wound and left the venom, but shrunk from the result."

"And what did Dacre?" asked the King.

"Gave him the lie, Sire," replied Woodville; "called upon

him to come boldly forward, make his accusation, and support it in the lists."

"He avoided that, I'll warrant," replied Henry; "I know him, Richard."

"He did so, Sire," answered the young gentleman; "he declared he had no accusation to bring—held Dacre to be good knight and true; but still kept his vague insinuations forward in view, as things that he mentions solely because it would be satisfactory to the knight himself to clear up whatever is obscure."

"And does the Lady Isabel give any credence, then, to these cowardly charges?" inquired the King.

"Oh! no, Sire," replied Woodville, warmly. "She has known Harry Dacre from her infancy; and those who have, are well aware that, though quick in temper, he is as kind as the May wind—as true and pure as light. But Dacre is miserable. He thinks, that, henceforth, the finger of suspicion will be pointed at him for ever; he sees imaginary doubts and dreads in every one's heart towards him; he feels the mere insinuation, as the first stain upon a high and noble name. It weighs upon him like a captive's chain; he cannot break it or get free—it binds his very heart and soul; and, casting all hope and happiness behind him, he is resolved to go and peril life itself in any rash enterprise that fortune may present."

"Poor man!" exclaimed Henry, "I can well understand his feelings: but God will bring all things to light. Yet, tell me, Richard of Woodville, do your own suspicions point in no particular direction?—have you no doubts of any one?"

"Perhaps I have, Sire," answered Woodville; "but I will beseech your Highness to grant me one of two things—either, to appoint a day and hour where, in fit lists and with arms at outrance, I may sustain my words to the death; or do not ask me to make a charge which I can support with no other proof than my right hand."

"I understand you, Richard," said the King, "and I will ask no farther. Your course is a just one; but I trust, and am sure, that heaven will not witness such deeds as have been done, without sending punishment. We both think of the same person, I know; and my eye is upon him. Tell me, however, one thing,—does not Sir Simeon of Roydon inherit the estates of this poor Lady Catherine?"

"He does, Sire, and is already in possession," replied Woodville.

"He is here at the court," rejoined the King, "and I shall show him favour for her sake."

Richard of Woodville gazed at the monarch in surprise, but a slight smile curled Henry's lip; and, although he gave no explanation of the words which he had spoken in a grave tone, his young companion was satisfied.

"I always love to get at the heart of a mystery," continued the King, seeing that Richard remained silent; "and I should much like to know, if you can tell me, what was the cause of that furious quarrel which took place between Sir Henry Dacre and this unhappy lady, just before he went? I fear I had some share in it."

"You were but the drop, Sire, that overflowed the cup," replied Woodville; "it had been near the brim for several days before; but what was said I know not. Remonstrance upon his part, and cutting sneers on hers, as usual, I suppose; but he has never told me."

Henry mused for a moment at this reply; and then, changing the subject, he inquired, "Is good Ned Dyram with you here in Westminster?"

"He is in the Hall below, Sire," answered Woodville; "and a most useful gift has he been to me already."

"A loan, Richard, a loan!" cried the King; "I shall claim him back one of these days, after he has served you in Burgundy. You will find he has faults as well as virtues; so have an eye to correct them. But even now, as the country folk say, I have a mind to borrow my own horse. I want his services for three days, if you will lend him to me—You are not yet ready to set out?"

"Not yet, Sire," replied Woodville; "but, in one week more, I hope to be on the sea."

"Well, then, send the man up to me, and he shall rejoin you in four days," answered Henry; "but let me see you to-morrow, my good friend, before you go home, for I would fain talk farther with you. It is seldom that a King can meet one with whom he can speak his thoughts plainly; and I find already a difference that makes me sad. Command and obedience, arguments of state and policy, flattering acquiescence in my opinion, whether right or wrong, praise, broad and coarse, or neat and half concealed,—of these I can have plenty, and to surfeit; but a friend, into whose bosom one can pour forth one's ideas without restraint, whether they be sad or gay, is a rare thing in a court. So, for the present, fare-you-well, Richard. You will stay here for the

banquet in the Hall, of course; and let me see you to-morrow morning, towards the hour of eight."

Richard of Woodville, as he well might, felt deeply gratified at the confidence which the King's words implied, and he answered, "I will not fail, Sire, to attend you at that hour, with more gratitude for your good opinion than any other favour. At the banquet, I will try to find a place, and will send Ned Dyram to you. Will you receive him now?"

"Yes, at once," replied the King; "for, good faith! these lords and bishops who are waiting for me, will think me long. I will order you a place below; but, mark me, Richard—if you meet Simeon of Roydon, seek no quarrel with him; and lay my commands upon Sir Henry Dacre, that he do not, on any pretence, again call him to the lists, without my knowledge and consent. As to Ned Dyram, he shall rejoin you soon. There is no way in which he may not be useful to you; for there is scarce an earthly chance for which his ready wit is not prepared. I met him first, studying alchemy with a poor wretch who, in pursuit of science, had blown all his wealth up the chimney of his furnace, and could no longer keep this boy. I found him next in an armourer's shop, hammering at hard iron, and thence I took him. He has a thousand qualities, some bad, some good. I think him honest; but his tongue is somewhat too free; and that which the wild Prince might laugh at, might not chime with the dignity of the crown. He will learn better in your train; but at the present I have an errand for him—so send him to me quickly."

Richard of Woodville bowed and withdrew; and, finding his way down to the Hall, he called Ned Dyram,—who was in full activity, aiding the royal officers to set out the tables,—and told him to go directly to the King. The man laughed, and ran off to fulfil the command: and about three quarters of an hour elapsed before the monarch appeared in the hall, which by that time was nearly filled with guests, invited to the banquet. He was followed by the train of high nobles and churchmen, whom Woodville had seen waiting in a chamber above; and the numerous tables, which were as many as that vast building could contain, were soon crowded.

It would be dull to the reader, were I to give any account of a mere ordinary event, such as a royal feast of those days —were I to tell the number of oxen and sheep that were

consumed—the capons, ducks, geese, swans, and peacocks, that appeared upon the board. Suffice it, that one of the royal servants placed Richard of Woodville according to his rank; that the banquet, with all its ceremonies, was somewhat long in passing, but that the young gentleman's comfort was not disturbed by the sight of Simeon of Roydon, who, if he were in the Hall, kept himself from Richard's eyes. The lower part of the chamber was filled with minstrels, musicians, and attendants; and music, as usual, accompanied the feast; but ever and anon, from the court before the palace and the neighbouring streets, were heard loud shouts, and laughter, and bursts of song, showing that the merriment and revelry of the multitude were still kept up, while the King and his nobles were feasting within.

Thus, when the banquet was over, the monarch gone from the Hall, and Richard of Woodville, with the rest of the guests, issued forth into the court, he was not surprised to find a gay and joyous scene without, the whole streets and roads filled with people, and every one giving himself up to joy and diversion. The gates of the court were thrown open, the populace admitted to the very doors of the palace, and a crowd of several hundred persons assembled round a spot in the centre, where a huge pile of dry wood had been lighted for the august ceremony of roasting an ox whole, which was duly superintended by half a dozen white-capped cooks, with a whole army of scullions and turnspits. Butts of strong beer stood in various corners; and a fountain, of four streams, flowed with wine at the side next to the Abbey. In one spot, people were jostling and pushing each other to get at the ale or wine; in another, they were dancing gaily to the sound of a viol; and further on was a tumbler, twisting himself into every sort of strange attitude for the amusement of the spectators. Loud shouts and exclamations, peals of laughter, the sounds of a thousand different musical instruments playing as many different tunes, with voices singing, and others crying wares of several sorts, prepared for the celebration of the day, made a strange and not very melodious din; but there was an air of festivity and rejoicing, of fun and good humour, in the whole, that compensated for the noise and the crowd.

Richard of Woodville had given orders for his horses to be taken to an inn at Charing, while waiting in the Hall before the banquet; and he now proceeded on foot, through the crowd in the palace courts, towards the gates. It was a

matter of some difficulty to obtain egress; for twilight was now coming on, and the multitude were flocking from the sights which had been displayed in the more open road to Charing during the last two or three hours, to witness the roasting of the ox, and to obtain some of the slices which were to be distributed about the hour of nine.

At length, however, he found himself in freer air; but still, every four or five yards, he came upon a gay group, either standing and talking to each other, or gathered round a show, or some singer or musician. It was one constant succession of faces; some young, some old, some pretty, some ugly, but all of them strange to Richard of Woodville. Nevertheless, more than once he met the same merry salutations which he had been treated to when on horseback; and, as he paused here and there, gazing at this or that gay party, he was twice asked to join in the dance, and still more frequently required to contribute to the payment of a poor minstrel with his pipe or cithern.

The minstrels were not, indeed, in those days at least, a very elevated race of beings; their poetical powers, if they ever in this country possessed any, had entirely merged in the musical; and, though they occasionally did sing to their own instruments, or to those of others, the verses were generally either old ballads, or pieces of poetry composed by persons of a higher education than themselves.

Nearly opposite the old dwelling of the kings of Scotland, Woodville's ear caught the tones of a very sweet voice singing; and, approaching the group of people that had gathered round, he saw an old man playing on an instrument somewhat like, but greatly inferior to a modern guitar, while a girl by his side, with fine features, and apparently—for the light was faint—a beautiful complexion, dressed in somewhat strange costume, was pouring forth her lay to the delighted ears of youths and maidens. She had nearly finished the song, when the young gentleman approached; and, in a moment or two after, she went round with a cap in her hand, asking the donations of the listeners.

Woodville had been pleased, and he threw in some small silver coin, more than equal to all that the rest had given; and, resuming her place by the old man's side, she whispered a word in his ear, upon which he immediately struck his instrument again, and she began another ditty in honour, it would appear, of her generous auditor:—

SONG.

The bark is at the shore,
The wind is in the sail,
Fear not the tempest's roar.
There's fortune in the gale;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

Oh, go'st thou far or nigh,
To Palestine or France,
For thee soft hearts shall sigh,
And glory wreath thy lance;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

The courtly hall or field,
Still luck shall thee afford;
Thy heart shall be thy shield,
And love shall edge thy sword;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

The lark shall sing on high,
Whatever shores thou rov'st;
The nightingale shall try,
To call up her thou lov'st;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

In hours of pain and grief,
If such thou must endure,
Thy breast shall know relief,
In honour tried and pure;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

And Fortune soon or late,
Shall give the jewell'd prize;
For deeds, in spite of fate,
Gain smiles from ladies' eyes;
And the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

The song was full of hope and cheerfulness; and though the melody was simple, as all music was in those days, it went happily with the words. Richard of Woodville well understood, that though certainly not an improvisation, the verse was intended for him; and feeling grateful to the girl for her promises of success, he drew forth his purse, and held out to her another piece of money. She stepped gracefully forward to receive it, and this time extended a fair, small hand, instead of the cap which she had before borne round the crowd; but just at that moment, a party of horsemen came up at full gallop, and, as if for sport—probably under the influence of wine—rode fiercely through the little circle assembled to hear the song.

The listeners, young and active, easily got out of the way; but not so the old minstrel, who stood still, as if bewildered, and was knocked down and trampled by one of the horsemen. The girl, his companion, with a shriek, and Richard of Woodville, with a cry of indignation, started forward together; and the latter, catching the horse which had done the mischief by the bridle, with his powerful arm forced it back upon its haunches, throwing the rider to the ground with a heavy fall. As the man went down, his hood was cast back, and Woodville beheld the face of Simeon of Roydon. But he paused not to notice him farther, instantly turning to raise the old man, and endeavouring to support him. The poor minstrel's limbs had no strength, however, and fearing that he was much hurt, the young gentleman exclaimed, "Good heaven! why did you not get out of their way?"

The old man made no answer; but the girl replied, wringing her hands—"Alas! he is blind!"

"Let us bear him quick to some hospital!" said Richard; "he is stunned. Who will aid to carry him?"

"I will, sir!—I will!" answered half-a-dozen voices from the crowd; and the old minstrel was immediately raised in

the arms of three or four stout young men, and carried towards the neighbouring nunnery and hospital of St. James's, accompanied by his fair companion.

Woodville was about to follow, but Sir Simeon of Roydon, who had by this time regained his saddle, thrust himself in the way, saying, in a fierce and bitter tone—"Richard of Woodville, I shall remember this!"

"And I shall not forget it, Simeon of Roydon," replied the other, hardly able to refrain from punishing him on the spot. "Get thee hence! Thou hast done mischief enough!"

The knight was about to reply; but a shout of execration burst from the people, and, at the same moment, a stone, flung from an unseen hand, struck him on the face, cutting his cheek severely, and shaking him in the saddle. His companions, alarmed at what they had done, had already ridden on; and, seeing that he was likely to fare ill in the hands of the crowd, Roydon put spurs to his horse, and galloped after them, muttering curses as he went.

Richard of Woodville soon overtook the little party which was hurrying on with the injured man to the lodge of the monastery, and found the poor girl weeping bitterly.

"Alas! noble sir!" she said, as soon as she saw him, "he is dead! He does not speak!—his head falls back!"

"I trust not—I trust not!" answered Woodville. "He is but stunned, probably, by the blow, and will soon recover."

She shook her head mournfully; and the next moment, one of the young men, who had taken up the old man's cithern, stepped forward before the rest, and rang the bell at the gate of the nunnery. It was opened instantly, and Woodville briefly explained to the porter what was the matter.

"Bring him in here," said the old man; "we will get help. The good prioress is skilful at such things, and brother Martin still more so; and he is nearest, for the monk's lodging is only just below there. Let one of the men run down and ask for brother Martin."

In the meantime, the old minstrel was brought in, and laid upon the pallet in the porter's room; and the news of the accident having spread, the lodge was speedily filled with nuns, having their veils down, all eagerly inquiring what had happened.

The prioress and brother Martin appeared at the same moment; and, in answer to their questions, Woodville ex-

plained the facts of the case; for the poor girl, overwhelmed with grief, was kneeling by her old companion's side, and holding a small ebony cross which she wore round her neck to his motionless lips.

"Give us room, my child—give us room!" said brother Martin, putting his hand kindly on her shoulder; and, having obtained access to the pallet, he and the prioress proceeded to examine what injuries the poor old man had received. Their search was short, however; for, after feeling the back of the head with his hand, and then putting his fingers on the pulse, the good monk turned round, with a grave countenance, saying, "God have mercy on his soul; for to Him has it gone."

The poor singer covered her eyes with her hands, and sobbed bitterly. All the rest were silent for a moment; and then Richard of Woodville, turning to the prioress, said, in a low voice, "I will beseech you, lady, to see, in all charity, to this poor man's interment; and that masses be said in your chapel for his soul. Also, if you would, like a good Christian, take some heed of this poor girl, who is his daughter, I suppose, I should be glad, for it may better become you than me; but whatever expense the convent may be at, I will repay, though, Heaven knows, I am not over rich. My name is Richard of Woodville; and to-morrow, if you will send a messenger to me, I shall be found at the Acorn, just beyond the Bishop of Durham's lodging. You must send before eight, however, or after ten; for at eight I am to be with the King."

The prioress bowed her head, saying simply, "I will," and Woodville turned to depart; but the poor girl, who had heard his words, started up, and catching his hand, pressed her lips upon it, then knelt by the pallet again, and seemed to pray.

Without farther words, Woodville quitted the lodge; the porter hurried on to open the gates, and the young gentleman went out with the people who had borne or accompanied the poor old minstrel thither. Just as he had reached the road, however, he heard a voice say, "Richard of Woodville, farewell; and remember!"

He started and turned round; but though it was a female voice that spoke, there were none but men around him; and at the same moment the gate rolled heavily to.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SICK MIND.

We must return, dear reader, for a short time, to the scenes in which our tale first began, and to the old hall of the good knight of Dunbury. Richard of Woodville and Sir Henry Dacre had been absent for two days upon their journey to another part of Hampshire, where we have shown somewhat of their course; and Sir Philip Beauchamp sat by the fire meditating, while his daughter Isabel, and fair Mary Markham, were seated near, plying busily the needle through the embroidery frame, and not venturing to disturb his reverie even by whispered conversation. From time to time, the old man muttered a few sentences to himself, of which the two ladies could only catch detached fragments, such as, "They must know by this time,—Dacre could not but do so,—I am sure 'tis for that—," and several similar expressions, showing that his mind was running upon the expedition of his nephew and his friend, in regard to the object of which, neither Isabel nor Mary had received any information.

It must not be said, however, that they did not suspect anything; for the insinuations of Sir Simeon of Roydon had been told them; and, though neither weak nor given to fear—a knight's daughter, in a chivalrous age—Isabel could not help looking forward with feelings of awe, and an undefinable sinking of the heart, to the events which were likely to follow. She fully believed that she experienced, and had ever experienced, towards Sir Henry Dacre, but one class of sensations—regard for his high character and noble heart, and pity for the incessant grief and anxiety which her cousin's conduct had brought upon him from his early youth. But such feelings are very treacherous guides, and lead us far beyond the point at which they tell us they will stop. With her, too, they had had every opportunity of so doing, for she trusted to them in full confidence. Hers had been the task, also, of soothing and consoling him under all he had suffered—a dangerous task, indeed, for one young, kind, gentle, and enthusiastic, to undertake towards a man whom she admired and respected. But then, they had known each other from infancy, she thought; they had grown up together like

brother and sister, and the tie between them had only been brought nearer by the betrothing of Dacre to her cousin.

Had a doubt ever entered into Isabel's mind, since Catherine's death, it may be asked, in regard to her own feelings towards Dacre? Perhaps it might; but, if so, it had been banished instantly; and she looked upon the very thought as a wrong to her own motives. She would never suffer such a thing, she fancied, to trouble her again. "Dacre had loved Catherine—surely he had loved her; and yet—" but fresh doubts arose; and Isabel, willing to be blind, still turned to other meditations.

Mary Markham, on the other hand, with less cause for anxiety, and no motive for shutting her eyes, saw more clearly, and judged more accurately. She knew that Isabel Beauchamp loved Harry Dacre, and believed she had loved him long; though she did her full justice, and was confident that her fair companion was as ignorant of what was in her own bosom, as of the treasures beneath the waves. But Mary felt certain that such was not the case with Dacre in regard to his own sensations. She had marked his eye when it turned upon Isabel, had seen the faint smile that came upon his lip when he spoke to her, and had observed the struggle which often took place, when inclination led him to seek her society, and the thought of danger and of wrong held him back—a struggle in which love had been too often victorious. She doubted not, that he was gone to call upon Simeon of Roydon to come forward with proof of his charges, or to sustain them with the lance; and, though she entertained little doubt of the issue of such a combat, if it took place, she felt grieved and anxious both for Isabel and Dacre.

There are some men whose native character, notwithstanding every artifice to conceal it, will penetrate through all disguises, and produce sensations which seem unreasonable, even to those who feel them without being able to trace them to their source. Such a one was Sir Simeon of Roydon. He had never been seen by any of Sir Philip Beauchamp's family to commit any base or dishonest act; and yet there was not one in all that household, from the old knight to the horse-boy, who did not internally believe him to be capable of every crafty knavery. His insinuations, therefore, in regard to Sir Henry Dacre, passed by as empty air, at least for the time; but all had, nevertheless, a strong conviction on their minds, that the doubts he had attempted to raise

would rankle deep in the heart of their unhappy object, and poison the whole course of his existence, unless some fortunate event were to bring to light the real circumstances of poor Catherine Beauchamp's death.

The whole party, then, were in a sad and gloomy mood; and even the gay, young spirit of Mary Markham was clouded, as they sat round the fire in the great hall, on one of those April evenings when, after a day of summer sunshine, chilly winter returns with his fit companion, night.

As they were thus seated, however, each busy with his own thoughts, the sound of horses' feet in the court was heard, and, in a minute after, Dacre himself entered. He mounted the steps at the end of the pavement with a slow pace, and every eye was turned to his countenance to gather some indication from his look of the state of mind in which he returned. The old knight rose and grasped his hand, asking, in a low voice, "What news, Harry? Nay, boy, you need not strive to conceal it from me—I know what you went for. Will the slanderer do battle?"

"No, my noble friend," replied Dacre; "he is coward, too, as well as scoundrel. There is his craven answer; you may read it aloud. The matter is now over, and that hope is gone."

"You should not have done this, Harry, without consulting me," said Sir Philip; "I have some experience in such things. At the very last that was fought between any two gentlemen of rank and station, I was judge of the field, and know right well what appertains to knightly combat."

"Of that I was full sure," answered Dacre, pressing his hand; "and to you I should have applied for counsel and aid, as soon as I had brought him to the point; but I thought it best to be silent till that was done. I was vain, perhaps, Sir Philip, to think that these dear ladies might take some interest in such a matter—might feel anxious even for me; and though I knew that they would have seen me go forth, with satisfaction, in defence of my honour, and would have bade God speed me on my course, yet it was needless to speak of what was to come, till it did come—and you will see, that it is to be never."

"Read it, Hal—read it," said the knight; "my eyes are old."

Sir Henry Dacre read the letter, the contents of which we have already seen, and Sir Philip Beauchamp and Mary Markham commented freely thereon, marking well its base-

ness and its craft; but Isabel remained silent; and, looking down at her embroidery, her bright eyes let fall a tear. Many emotions mingled to produce that drop; she felt to her heart's core how bitter it must be to live with such a doubt hanging over us for ever, like a dark cloud; and the repeated mention of Catherine's name called back to her mind, in all its freshness, the memory of her cousin's sad fate; and she was led on to think, too, how happy the wayward girl might have been, if she had but known the advantages which Heaven had granted her.

Dacre saw the tear, and marked the silence, and read neither quite aright; for, with a wounded spot in the heart, the lightest touch will give torture. He sat down with the rest, however; he strove to cast off some of his gloom; he told of his journey with Richard of Woodville; and informed the old knight that his late guest, Hal of Hadnock, was now King of England; but, while Sir Philip laughed heartily, and called his sovereign "a mad-headed boy," his young friend relapsed into deep meditation, and the black thought, that he must be for ever a doubted and suspected man, again took possession of his mind.

The next morning, when he rose, he was more cheerful. Sleep, which had visited his eyelids only by short glimpses for the last week, had, this night, stayed with him undisturbed; and, what seemed to him more extraordinary still, sweet dreams had come with slumber, giving him back the happiness of former days. He had seemed a boy again, and had wandered with Isabel Beauchamp through the woods and fields around; had heard the birds sing on the spray, and watched the fish darting through the stream. Summer and sunshine had been round their path, and that misty splendour, which only is seen in the visions of the night, as if poured forth from some secret source in the heart of man when the pressure of all external things is taken away—a slight indication, perhaps, of the adaptation of his spirit to the enjoyments of a brighter world than this. He slept longer than usual; and, when he rose, he found the old knight and his daughter in the hall.

"I am going down, Harry," said Sir Philip, "to settle a difference between some of the monks and Roger Dayley, of Little Ann, about his field. I shall find you when I come back."

"Nay, I will go with you, noble friend," answered Dacre; "I wish to see my good Lord Abbot."

"That you cannot do, unless you ride to London," replied the old knight; "he went yesterday morning early to attend the King's coronation. Stay with Isabel and Mary. I will be back soon."

It was too tempting a proposal to be refused; and while Sir Philip, with a page carrying his heavy sword, walked down to the Abbey, Dacre remained with Isabel alone in the hall. They watched her father from the door till he entered the wood, and then turning, walked up and down the rush-covered pavement for several minutes without speaking. Dacre's heart was full of anxious thoughts; and though he much wished to fathom the feelings of Isabel's heart, and discover some ground for future hope, yet he dreaded to find all his fears verified; and the words trembled at the gate of speech without obtaining utterance. Isabel, however, was more confident in herself, and less conscious of her own sensations; she saw and grieved at the state of Dacre's mind, and longed to give him comfort and consolation as in days of yore. Finding, then, that he did not begin upon the subject of his cares and sorrows, she resolved to do so herself; and after a pause, during which she felt agitated, and hesitated she knew not why, she said, "I am glad to speak with you alone, Harry; for I see you are very, very sad, and I would fain persuade you to take comfort."

"Oh, many things make me thus sad, dear Isabel," replied the knight, with a faint smile; "but I will try to do better with time."

"Nay, Harry," she answered; "you cannot conceal the cause of your sadness from me. I have known you from my childhood, too well not to understand it all. You were ever jealous too much of your fame; and now I know, because this false, bad man has insinuated things that never entered your thoughts, you fancy people will suspect you."

"And will they not, Isabel?" asked Dacre. "I should not say, perhaps, *suspect* me; for suspicion is a more fixed and tangible thing than that which I fear; but will there not be doubts, coming in men's mind against their will, and against their reason? Will they not, from time to time, when they think of Henry Dacre, and this sad history, and these dark scandals—will they not ask themselves, What, if it were really so?"

"Oh! no, no! Harry," replied his fair companion, warmly; "none will think so who know you—none will think so at all,

but the base and bad, who are capable of such acts themselves."

"Indeed, Isabel!" said Dacre. "And is such really your belief? You know not how suspicion clings, dear lady. If you stain a silken garment, can you ever make it clear and glossy, as once it was? and the fame of man or woman is of a still finer and frailer texture. There, one spot, one touch, lasts for ever."

With kind and tender words, and every argument that her own small experience could afford, Isabel Beauchamp tried to reassure him; and she succeeded at least in one thing—in convincing him so far of her full confidence in his honour, that he was on the eve of putting it to the strongest test. The acknowledgment of his love hung upon his lips, and, if then spoken, might perchance, in her eagerness to prove her conviction of his innocence, have been met with that warm return, which would have brought the best balm to his heart, although the first effect upon her might have been agitation and alarm. But ere he could utter the words on which his fate depended, Mary Markham joined them, and he waited for another opportunity. Dacre returned to his own house at night; but every day he went over to the hall, his mood varying like a changeful morning, sometimes sunny with hope and temporary forgetfulness, sometimes all cloud and gloom, when memory recalled the suspicions that had been pointed at him. Those suspicions, too, were frequently recalled to his mind even by his own acts, for he eagerly strove to discover by whose instrumentality his whole course, on the unfortunate night of poor Catherine Beauchamp's death, had been conveyed to Sir Simeon of Roydon. But by so doing, he only fretted his own spirit, and gained no information; whoever was the spy, he remained concealed.

Three or four days were thus passed before he obtained any second opportunity of speaking with Isabel alone; but, on his arrival at the dwelling of Sir Philip Beauchamp, on the morning of the 9th of April, he was told by a servant whom he found in the hall, that the family had gone forth into the park; and, following immediately, he found Isabel sitting under the trees, without companions. She seemed to have been weeping, and it was a pleasant task for Dacre to strive to console her who had so often been his own comforter.

"There are tears in your eyes, dear Isabel," he said, as she rose gracefully to meet him. "What has grieved you?"

"Have you not seen my father?" asked the lady. "Do you not know that our dear Mary is going to leave us? She goes to London to-day, and he goes with her so far."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the knight; "that is very sudden."

"And very sad," answered Isabel; "the hall will be melancholy enough without her now—I cannot but weep, and shall never cease to regret her going."

"Nay, nay; time will bring balm, dear Isabel," answered Dacre. "You have often told me so."

"And have you believed me, Harry?" answered the lady, with a faint and almost reproachful smile; "even last night, you were more sad and grave than ever."

"Ay, but this is a different case," replied Dacre; "one can lose a friend—ay, even by death; one can lose anything more easily than honour and renown."

"But the loss of yours is only in your own fancy, Dacre," she answered. "Who believes this charge, that Simeon of Roydon dares to hint, but not to avow? Whom has it affected? In whom do you see a change? Surely not in my father; surely not in me."

"No, assuredly, Isabel," he said, after thinking for a while; "but as yet I have had no occasion to make the trial. Hearken, and I will put a case. Suppose, dear Isabel, that I were to love; suppose the lady that I loved had heard this tale; suppose that she had loved me well before, and at her knee I were now to crave the blessing of her hand; would not a doubt, would not a hesitation cross her mind? Would she not ask herself—"

"Oh, no!" cried Isabel; but Dacre went on, not suffering her to conclude.

"You put it not fully to your own heart, dear Isabel," he said. "Suppose you were that lady—suppose that all Harry Dacre's hopes and happiness for life were staked on your reply; suppose that to you, who have so often consoled him in affliction, calmed him in anger, soothed him in anxiety, he were to say, 'Isabel, will you be my comforter through life, the star of my existence, the recompence for all I have suffered?' would not one thought—"

Isabel trembled violently, and her cheek turned ashy pale.

"It is enough," said Dacre, with a quivering lip; "I am answered! That memory could never be banished from your heart. It is enough!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Isabel; but, as will almost always happen when a word may make all clear, an interruption

came; before she could go on, good old Sir Philip Beauchamp was seen upon the steps of the house, waving them to come back, with a loud "Halloo!"

They both turned, and walked towards the hall in silence. Isabel would fain have spoken, but agitation overpowered her. She wished that Dacre, by a single word, would give her an opportunity of reply; but his over-sensitive heart was convinced of her feelings—reading them all wrong; and he would not force her to speak what he thought must be painful for her to utter, and for him to hear. Twice she made up her mind to explain, but twice her heart failed her at the moment of execution; and it was not till they were within a few steps of the place where her father stood, that she could say, in a low voice, "You are mistaken, Harry; indeed you are mistaken!"

He shook his head with a bitter smile, and walked on in silence.

CHAPTER X.

THE MINSTREL'S GIRL.

At the hour appointed by the King, Richard of Woodville arrived at the palace, and was at once introduced to Henry's presence. The monarch was now quite alone, and seemed in a more cheerful, a less meditative mood, than the day before. "Well, Richard," he said, "how sped you last night? you found room in hall, and a place at board, I trust?"

"I did, Sire," replied Woodville; "and so long as I was here 'twas well; but as I returned homeward to my hostel, I saw that done which grieved me, and would grieve your Highness, too, were it told."

"Speak it, speak it," said the King; "I am now in that station where every day I must hear that which offends my ear, if I would perform the first duty of a king, and render justice to my people. What is this you saw?"

Briefly and accurately Richard of Woodville, as he had previously determined, related to the monarch the facts attending the death of the old minstrel, by the brutal act of Sir Simeon of Roydon, and his companions; and he could see Henry's brow gather into a heavy frown, and his cheek flush.

When he had done, the King rose from his chair, before he spoke, and walked twice across the small chamber in which the young gentleman had found him.

"This is bad," he said at length; "this is bad; but I must not interfere with the course of law. The matter will be inquired into, of course. If the law should not punish the offence, I might myself inflict some chastisement, and, by banishing this man from my court and presence, mark my indignation at his rash contempt of human life and suffering, to call it nothing worse. But I have other views, Richard; and if I must strike, I would have it effectually."

"I do not understand you, Sire," replied Woodville, seeing that the King paused.

"No, perhaps not," said Henry; and then falling into a fit of musing again, he remained for more than a minute with his eyes fixed upon the ground. "Call me a page," he continued, at length; "I will see this Sir Simeon of Roydon."

Richard of Woodville obeyed; and when the boy appeared, Henry directed him in the clear brief words, with which even trivial orders are given by men of powerful and accurate minds, to inquire of the sergeant of the gates where Sir Simeon of Roydon was to be found, and then to summon him immediately to his presence.

"He shall make some compensation to the old man's daughter, or whoever she is, whatever the law may say," the King continued, turning to his companion, after having spoken to the page: "but tell me, Richard, was this the only adventure you met with yesterday? Ned Dyram told me, that some one had spoken to you by name in the crowd, bidding you not to let poor Dacre do battle with Simeon of Roydon,—she anticipated my commands, it would seem."

"She did so, truly, Sire," replied Woodville; "but I could never discover who it was, though she again spoke to me at the gates of the convent as I came out."

"It is very strange," said the King; "did you not know the voice?"

"It seemed somewhat disguised," answered the young gentleman; "but still it was clearly a woman's voice; and there were tones in it not unfamiliar to my ear, yet not sufficiently strong on recollection to enable me in any way to judge who spoke."

"Have we got fairies amongst us, even in Westminster?" asked the monarch, laughing. "Well, my good friend, you have nothing to do but obey your fair monitor."

"In that I shall not fail, Sire," replied Richard; "for I shall have no cause to prevent or encourage Dacre—Simeon of Roydon will take good heed to that. But I trust neither the lady nor your Highness will forbid my chastising this man myself, if need should be; for, as I have told you, Sire, I cast him from his horse last night, before his comrades; and he will seek revenge in some shape, I am sure."

"To defend himself is every man's right," replied the King; "but I must insist, that no arranged encounter takes place between you and Sir Simeon of Roydon, without your sovereign's consent." The King spoke sternly, almost harshly; but he added a moment after, in a mild and familiar tone, "The truth is, Richard, that I have resolved, as much as possible, to put a stop, both to the trial by battle and combats at outrance between my subjects. The blood of Englishmen is too precious to their King and their country to be shed so frequently as it has hitherto been in private quarrels. The evil is increasing; and if it be not stayed, a time will come when every idle jest will be the subject of a combat, and the man of mere brute courage will venture upon any wrong he chooses to do another, because he values his life less than his neighbour. Such a state shall never grow up under me. The day may not be far distant when, in defence of the rights of this crown, I shall give every English gentleman an opportunity of displaying his valour and his skill; but, till then, I will hold a strong hand over quarrelsome folks. As a last resource for honour really wounded, or, under the sanction of the law, for the judgment of God in dark cases which human wisdom cannot decide, I may consent that an appeal be made to the lance; but not till every other means has been tried. Such is my resolution. Let that suffice you. I know you will obey; and in the court of Burgundy, if I hear right, you will have plenty of occasions, should you be too full of blood, to shed it freely. I have wished to give you some gift, my friend," he continued, in a tone of kindly condescension; "but for the present, I can think of nothing better than this."

He took a ring from his finger, and held it out to the young gentleman who stood beside him, adding, "Take it, Richard; wear it always; and when you look upon it, think of Hal of Hadnock. But should you at any time seek aught of the King of England, seal your letter with that ring, and I will open and read the contents myself, and immediately. It shall go hard, but I will grant you your boon, if it be such as the

Richard of Woodville whom I know, is likely to request. So, farewell, and God speed you, and lead you to honour."

Richard of Woodville knelt, and kissed the gracious Prince's hand; and then, retiring from his presence, sped back to his inn without adventure.

All traces of the last day's festival had disappeared; the citizens had resumed their usual occupations; the artisan had gone to his work, the merchant to his warehouse, the tradesman to his stall, the monk to his cloister, the priest to his chapel or his church. The streets, though there was many a passenger hurrying to and fro, seemed almost empty, by comparison; and a scene that was in itself gay, looked dull from the want of all the glitter and pageantry of the preceding afternoon.

The inn, called the Acorn, at which Richard of Woodville had taken up his abode, was a low building, in what we still term the Strand, between the Cross at Charing and a very small monastery, which was soon after attached to the abbey of Roncesvalles in Navarre, and acquired the name of Roncêvaux. The entrance to the Acorn was a tall dark arch, and as soon as Richard of Woodville rode in, followed by his two attendants—for Ned Dyram he had not seen since the day before—the host presented himself, saying, with a low reverence and a smile, "There has been a fair maid seeking you, noble sir. There have been tears in her eyes, too, full lately. I hope you are not a faithless squire, to make the pretty maiden weep."

"Poor thing, she has good cause," answered Woodville, gravely. "She is the poor old man's daughter, I suppose, who was killed by the horses last night. When did she say she would return?"

"She is here now! she is here now!" cried the host's wife, from within. "How can you be such a fool, Jenkyn! I took her in till the noble gentleman returned. I knew she was no light o' love, but only came from foreign lands."

"I never said she was, good wife," replied her husband. "Shall I bring her up, sir, to your chamber?"

"No," answered Richard; "it wants an hour of dinner yet; let her come with me to the hall, if it be vacant."

"That it is, discreet sir," replied the host. "Now, I warrant you," he continued, murmuring to himself, as he walked away to call the poor girl to her kind benefactor, "he has got some lady love himself, and fears it should come to her ears, were he to entertain a pretty maiden in his own chamber."

Perhaps some such thought might pass through Richard of Woodville's mind; but certainly it would never have entered therein, had it not been for the host's first suspicion; and he would have received the poor girl in his own room without hesitation, though the minstrels of that day and their followers were generally a somewhat dissolute and licentious race. It has happened strangely, indeed, in all ages, that those who follow, as their profession, the sweetest of arts, music, which would seem intended to elevate and purify the mind and heart, should be so frequently obnoxious to the charge of immoral life; but so it has been, alas, though difficult to account for.

Finding his way through one or two long ill-lighted passages, Richard of Woodville opened the door of the room appropriated to the daily meals of the guests and their host, and had not long to wait for the object of his compassion. She was not dressed in the same manner as the night before, but still, her garb was singular. A bright red scarf, which had been twined through her black hair, was no longer there; and the rich, luxuriant tresses, were bound plainly round her head, which was partially covered also by a hood of simple gray cloth. The rest of her apparel was white, except at the edge of the petticoat, which came not much below the knee, and was bordered by two bands of gold lace. Her small, delicate ankles, as fair as alabaster, were, nevertheless, without covering; and her feet were clothed in small slippers of untanned leather, trimmed and tied with gold.

Bending down her beautiful head as she entered, she said, "I have come to thank you, noble sir."

"Nay, no thanks, my fair maiden," answered Woodville, placing a stool for her to sit, as the host retired. "I did but what any Christian and gentleman ought to do; so, say not a word of that. But I am glad you have come, for I wish much to hear more of you, and to know what will become of you now."

"Ah! what, indeed?" said the girl, casting down her eyes, which had before been fixed upon the young gentleman's countenance.

"Have you no friends, no home, to which you can go?" asked Woodville.

"In this country, no friends that would receive me—no home that would be open to me," replied the girl, the tears rolling over the long black lashes, and trickling down her cheek. "I am not given to yield to sorrow thus," she added;

"had I been, it would have crushed me long ago. But this last blow has been heavy; and, like a reed beaten down by the storm, I shall not raise my head till the sun shines again."

"But you are of English birth?" inquired Richard of Woodville; "if not, you speak our tongue rarely."

"Oh, yes! I am English," she cried, eagerly; "English in heart, and spirit, and birth; but yet, my mother was from a distant land."

"And was that poor old man your father?" demanded her companion; "come, let me hear something of your former life, that I may think what can be done for the future."

The girl evidently hesitated; she coloured, and then turned pale; and Richard of Woodville began to fear that, in the interest he had taken in her, he had been made the fool of imagination. "She is probably like the rest," he thought; "and yet, her very shame to speak it, shows that she has some good feelings left."

But, while he was still pondering, the girl exclaimed, clasping her hands, "Oh, yes! I am sure I may tell you. You are not one who—whatever might be his errors—would deprive a poor old man of blessed ground to rest in, or the prayers of good men for his soul."

"Not I, indeed," replied the young gentleman; "methinks, we have no right to carry justice or punishment beyond the grave. When the spirit is called to its Creator, let him be judge—not man. But speak; I do not understand you clearly."

"I will make my tale short," she answered. "That old man was my father's father; a minstrel once in the house of the great Earl of Northumberland—I can just remember the Earl—and a gay and happy household it was. He was well paid and lodged, much loved by the good lord, and wealthy by his bounty. My father was stout and tall, a brave man, and skilful in arms; and he was the Percy's henchman. Once, when one of the Earl's kinsmen went to the court of the Emperor, my father was sent with him, I have heard; and he returned with my mother, a native of a town called Innsbruck in the mountains. I know not whether you have heard of it; but it is a fair city, in good truth."

"You have seen it, then?" asked Richard of Woodville.

"Not a year since," answered the girl; "but, to my tale. When I was still young, my father fought and fell with Hotspur; and, not long after, the Duke's household was dis-

persed, and he himself obliged to fly to Wales, or Scotland, I know not which. My mother pined and died, for the people there loved not a stranger amongst them; and, after my father's death, called her nought but *the foreigner*. They laughed, too, at her language, for she could speak but poor English; and, what between their gibes and her own grief, she withered away daily, till her eyes closed. She taught me her own language, however; and I have not forgot it. She taught me her own faith, too; and I have not abandoned it."

"And that was—" exclaimed Richard.

"The holy Catholic faith!" replied the girl, crossing herself; "and nothing has ever been able to turn me from it. But still, I could not let it break all bonds—could I, noble sir?"

"Perhaps not," replied Richard of Woodville; "but let me hear farther."

"When the Earl fled, and my mother died," continued the girl, "my grandfather took me with him to the town of York; and, as he was wealthy, as I have said, his kinsfolk, who were many in the place, were glad to see him. He was very kind to me—oh, how kind! and taught me to sing, and play on many instruments. But there came a disciple of Wicliffe into the town, where there were already many Lollards in secret; and the poor old man listened to them, and became one of them. I would not hear them; for I ever thought of my mother, and what she had taught me; and this caused the first unkind words my grandfather ever gave me. He mourned for them afterwards, when he found I was not undutiful, as he had called me. But, in the mean time, he went on with the Lollards; till, one night, as they were coming from a place where they had met, a crowd of rabble and loose people set upon them with sticks and stones, and beat them terribly; and the poor old man was brought home, with his face and eyes sadly cut. Some of the Lollards were taken, and two were tried, and burnt as heretics. But my grandfather escaped that fate; for, by this time, his eyes had become red and fiery, and he kept close to his own house. The redness at length went away—but light went too; and he was in daily fear of persecution. One night, when he was very sad, I asked him why he stayed in York, where there were so many perils; but he shook his head, and answered, 'Because I am sightless, my child; and I have none to guide me.' Then I asked him again, if he had not me;

and if he thought I would not go with him to the world's end; and I found, by what he said, that he had long thought of going to foreign lands, but did not speak of it, because he thought that, as I would not hear his people, I would refuse to go. When he found I was ready, however, his mind was soon made up, and we went first to a town called Liege, where he had a brother, and there we lived happily enough for some time; for that brother, and all his family, thought on many matters with him. But he heard of a man named Huss, who is a great leader of that sect in a country called Bohemia, and he resolved to go thither, as he was threatened with persecution in Liege. We then wandered far and wide through strange lands. But why should I make my tale long? We suffered many things—were plundered, wronged, persecuted, beaten; and the money that he had began to melt away, with no resource behind; for we had heard that our own relations and friends in York had pillaged his house; and one had taken possession of it as his own. I then proposed to him that I should sing at festivals and tournaments, that he might keep the little he still had against an evil day. Thus we came through Germany, and Burgundy, and part of France and Brabant; and, at length, he determined that he would come back to his own country, which he did, only to be murdered last night, for we have not been a month in England."

"Alas! my poor girl," said Richard of Woodville, "yours is, indeed, a sad history; and, in truth, I know not what counsel to give you for the future. Alone, as you are, in the world, you need some one much to protect you."

"I do indeed," replied the girl, "but I have none; and yet," she added, after a moment, "these are foolish thoughts, brought upon me but by grief. I can protect myself. Many have a worse fate than I have; for how often are those who have been softly nurtured cast suddenly into misfortune and distress! I have been inured to it by degrees—taught step by step to struggle and resist. Mine is not a heart to yield to evil chances. The little that I want in life, I trust, I can honestly obtain; and, if not honestly, why, I can die. There is still a home for the wanderer—there is still a place of repose for the weary." But, as she spoke, the tears that rolled over her cheeks belied the fortitude which she assumed.

Richard of Woodville paused and meditated, ere he replied. "Stay," he said, at length, as the girl rose, and covered her head again with her hood, which she had cast

back, as if she were about to depart. "Stay! a thought has struck me. Perchance I can call the King's bounty to you. I myself am now about to depart for distant lands. I am going to the court of Burgundy in a few days, and shall not see our sovereign again before I set out; but I have a servant, who was once the King's, and he will have the means of telling your sad tale."

"To the court of Burgundy!" exclaimed the girl, eagerly; "Oh! that I were going thither with you!"

"That may hardly be," replied Woodville, with a smile, as she gazed with her large dark eyes upon his face.

"I know it," she answered, sighing, and cast her eyes down to the ground again, with the blood mounting into her cheek; "yet, why not in the same ship?—I have kinsfolk both in Liege and in Peronne—you would not see wrong done to me?"

"Assuredly not," said the young gentleman; "but if the King can be engaged to show you kindness, it will be better. What little I can spare, my poor girl, shall be yours; and I will send this man of whom I spoke, to see you and tell you more. First, however, you must let me know where you are lodged, and for whom he must ask, as it may be three or four days before he returns from the errand he is now gone to perform."

"My name is Ella Brune," replied the girl; and she went on to describe to Richard of Woodville the situation of the house in which she and her grandfather had taken up their abode, on their arrival in London a few days before. He found from her account that it was a small hostel just within the walls of the city, which the old man had known and frequented in former years; that the host and his good dame were kind and homely people; and that, though the poor girl had remained out watching the corpse at the lodge of the convent, she had returned that morning to explain the cause of her absence, and had been received with sympathy and consolation. Knowing well, however, that there is a limit to the tenderness of most innkeepers, and that that limit is seldom, if ever, extended beyond the length of their guest's purse, the young gentleman took three half nobles, which, to say truth, was as much as he could spare, and offered them to his fair companion, saying, "Trouble yourself not in regard to expenses of the funeral, Ella, or of the masses. The porter of the convent has been here this morning before I went out, and I have arranged all that with him."

The girl looked at the money in his hand, with a tearful eye and a burning cheek; but, after gazing for a moment, she put his hand gently away, saying, "No, no, I cannot take it—from you I cannot take it."

"And why not from me?" asked Richard of Woodville in some surprise.

She hesitated for an instant, and then replied, "Because you have been so good and kind already. Were it from a stranger, I might—but you have already given me much, paid much; and you shall not hurt yourself for me. I have enough."

"Nay, nay, Ella," said Richard, with a smile. "If I have been kind, that is a reason why you must not grieve me by refusing the little I can give; and as to what I have paid, I will say to you with Little John, whom you have heard of—

> "I have done thee a good turn for an
> Quit me when thou may."

"And what did Robin answer?" said the girl, a light coming up into her eyes as she forgot, for an instant, her loss and her desolate situation, in the struggle of generosity which she kept up against her young benefactor—

> "Nay by my troth, said Robin,
> So shall it never be."

"It must be, if you would not pain me," replied Richard of Woodville; "you must not be left in this wide place, my poor girl, without friend or money."

"Nay, but I have enough," she answered; "if I were tempted to take it, 'twould only be with the thought of crossing the sea, which costs much money, I know."

"Then take it for that chance, my poor Ella," replied Woodville, forcing the money into her hand; "and tell me what store you have got, in order that, if I have ought more to spare, when I have received what my copse-wood brings, I may send it to you by the servant I spoke of."

"Indeed, I know not," said Ella Brune; "there is a small leathern bag at the inn, in which we used to put all that we gathered; but I thought not to look what it contained. My heart was too heavy when I went back, to reckon money. But there is enough to pay all that we owe, I know; and as for the time to come," she added, with a melancholy smile, "I eat little, and drink less; so that my diet is soon paid."

Her words and manner had that harmony in them, which

can rarely be attained when both do not spring from the heart; and Richard of Woodville became more and more interested in the fair object of his kindness every moment. He detained her some time longer to ask farther questions; but, at length, the host opened the door, and told him, there was a young man without who sought to speak with him. This interruption terminated his conversation with Ella Brune; for, drawing her hood farther still over her face, she again rose, took his hand and pressed her lips upon it.

"The blessing of the queen of heaven be upon you, noble sir," she said; and then passed through the door, at which the landlord still stood, wondering a little at the deep gratitude which she seemed to feel towards his young guest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DECEIVER.

The King of England remained seated for many minutes exactly where Richard of Woodville had left him. His right hand rested on the arm of his chair; his left upon the hilt of his dagger; and his eyes remained fixed apparently upon the heavy building of the Abbey, such as it then appeared, before a far successor of his added to it a structure, rich, and perhaps beautiful in itself, but sadly out of keeping with the rest of the pile. But Henry saw not the long straight lines of the solemn mass of masonry; he heard not the bells chiming from the belfry hard by: his mind was absent from the scene in which his body dwelt; and his thoughts busy with things very different from those that surrounded him.

On what did they rest? Over what did the spirit of the great English monarch ponder, the very day after he had solemnly assumed the crown and sceptre?—Who can say?

He might, perhaps, remember other days with some regret; for we can never lose aught that we have possessed, without some mournful feelings of deprivation returning upon us from time to time, however great and overpowering be the compensation that we obtain; we can never change from one state and station in our mortal course to another with-

out sometimes thinking of former joys, and gone-by happiness, even though we have acquired grander blessings, and a more expansive sphere: and oh! how great is the change, even from the position of a prince, to that of a monarch! so great, indeed, that none who have not known it can even divine.

He might already, perhaps, feel what a burden a crown may sometimes become; how heavy are occasionally the gorgeous robes of state; he might look back to the free buoyancy of his early life, and long to roam the wide plains and fields of his kingdom alone, and at his ease. Or he might think of friendship—and there was none more capable of knowing and valuing it aright—and might wonder whether a monarch could indeed have a friend; one into whose bosom he could pour his secret thoughts, or with whose wit he could try his own, in free, but not undignified encounter; one in whom he could trust, and with whom he might relax, certain that the condescension of the sovereign would not be mistaken, nor the confidence of the friend betrayed.

Again, he might ponder upon all the difficulties and pains of a royal station: he might think, "Each of my subjects is burdened with his own cares and anxieties, but I with the care and anxiety of the whole:" or his mind might turn to the especial troubles and discomforts of a monarch, and remember how many he must have to disappoint; how often he must have to punish; how much he must have to refuse; how seldom he might be permitted to forgive; what great works he must necessarily leave undone; what good deeds he might be obliged to neglect; what faults he must be called upon to overlook; what pain and grief, even to the good and wise, a stern necessity might compel him to inflict.

He might, perhaps, think of any or all of these things, for they were all within the grasp of his character, as Henry was peculiarly a thoughtful monarch. We are, indeed, only accustomed to look upon him either as a wild youth, suddenly and somewhat strangely reformed, or as a great conqueror and skilful general, a prudent and ambitious prince. But those who will inquire into his private life, who will mark the recorded words that occasionally broke from his lips, trace the causes and course of his actions, examine his conduct to his friends, and even to his enemies, who will, in short, strip off the monarch's robes and look upon the man, will find a meditative spirit, though a quick one; a warm

heart, though a firm one; a rich and lively imagination, though a clear and vigorous judgment. He was not one to take upon him the cares of government without feeling all their weight; to regard a throne as a seat of ease and pleasure; or to assume the grand responsibilities of sovereign power, without examining them stedfastly and sternly, seeing all that is bright and all that is dark therein, and feeling keenly every sacrifice for which they call.

To love and to be beloved by a whole nation, to give and to receive happiness by a wise government of a great people, is assuredly a mighty recompence for all the pains of royal station; but yet those pains will be felt hourly while the reward is afar; and the monarch's conversation with Richard of Woodville had awakened him to some of those evils which the wisest rule cannot entirely remedy. Almost under the windows of his palace, on the very day of his coronation, in the midst of rejoicing and festivity, one of his subjects, an innocent inoffensive old man, had been brutally deprived of life by a party of those who had been feasting at his own table; and, when he remembered all the scenes with which the course of his early life had made him acquainted throughout this wide land, he saw what a task it would be to restrain the wild licence of a host of turbulent nobles, and to bind them to submission to the laws, and to reverence for the rights and happiness of others.

The monarch was still deep in thought when the page whom he had sent for Sir Simeon of Roydon, returned, announcing that he was in waiting without; and Henry at once ordered him to be admitted. The knight advanced with courtly bows, and more than due reverence; for he was one of those who, overbearing and haughty to their inferiors, are always cringing and fawning towards those above them, at least until they are detected.

But Henry came to the point at once, saying, with a stern brow, "I hear matters regarding you, Sir Simeon of Roydon, that please me not; and I would fain hear from your own lips, what explanation you can give. Know, sir, that the subjects of this crown are not to be murdered with impunity, and that sooner or later blood will find a tongue to accuse those that spill it."

The knight turned somewhat pale under the keen eye of the King; but he answered at once, in smooth and fluent tones, "I was not aware, Sire, that I had done aught that should bring upon me the greatest punishment that I could

receive—that of falling under the displeasure of your Highness; for any other infliction which might follow that severe misfortune, would seem nothing in comparison, or light, indeed, if by any bodily suffering I could remove the heavy weight of your anger. May I humbly inquire what is my fault? It must be great, I am sure, though I know it not, to make so clement a King regard his servant so harshly."

"It is great, sir," replied Henry, who could not be deluded with fair words. "Did you not, last night, after quitting the Hall below, cause the death of an old man by a most brutal outrage?"

"Nay, Heaven forbid!" cried Roydon, with well-feigned surprise and grief. "Your Highness does not, I trust, mean to say that the poor old man is dead?"

"He was killed upon the spot, sir," answered Henry; "and I am told you did not even stop to inquire what had been the result of your own act."

"I will go home and have him slaughtered without delay," exclaimed Roydon, as if speaking to himself in a paroxysm of regret.

"Have whom slaughtered?" asked the King, gazing upon him coldly; for he began to divine the course his defence was to take.

"The brute that did it, Sire," replied the knight; "three times has that horse nearly deprived me of life, which I heeded not much, for it is a fine though unruly animal: but now that he has taken the life of another, his own shall be forfeit. Scarcely had I mounted when, with the bit between his teeth, he set off at full speed; some of my companions galloped after to stop him, if possible, but were unable, till a gentleman on foot, I know not who, caught the bridle in the crowd; and I, not seeing what had befallen, rode on, keeping him in with difficulty."

A slight smile curled the lip of the King, showing to Sir Simeon Roydon that he was not fully believed; and a dark feeling of anger—the rage of detected meanness—gathered itself in the inmost recesses of his heart, with only the more bitter intensity because he dared not suffer it to peep forth. There is nothing that we hate so much as one whom, however much he may offend us, we cannot injure. Vengeance is the drink by which the dire thirst of hate is often assuaged; but if that cannot by any possibility be obtained, the burning of the heart goes on increasing till it becomes the unquenchable drought of fever.

The monarch answered calmly, however, and without further reproach. "Your tale, Sir Simeon," he said, "is somewhat different from that which previously reached my ears. I trust it can be substantiated in all its parts; for this matter must be investigated fully. The crown officer will, of course, do his duty by inquest upon the body. It will be well for you to be present; and the law will then take its due effect. Retire for a time, sir, into another chamber, and I will cause inquiry to be made, as to when a jury will be ready to investigate the case."

Sir Simeon of Roydon bowed with a sad and respectful countenance, and turned towards the door; but when he reached it, the expression of his face, now averted from the King, was very different from that which it had been a moment before. A mocking smile sat upon his lip—the sneering, bitter expression of a bad spirit, which has gained some advantage over a nobler one; but it was gone again the moment he opened the door and stood in presence of two or three attendants, who were waiting in the ante-room. At the same instant, the voice of Henry called the page, and Sir Simeon, pausing and seating himself, could hear the King give orders for making the inquiries which he had mentioned. In less than twenty minutes, the page returned and entered the monarch's closet, after which the knight was recalled.

"I find, sir," said Henry, when he appeared again before him, "that uncommonly quick proceedings have been taken in this case. The inquest has sat already; and the good men have pronounced the death accidental. So far the finding is satisfactory; but as it is clear that the accident occurred by your furious riding of a horse which you yourself acknowledge to be vicious and dangerous, I have to require that you make the only compensation that can be made to the person who I am told is this old man's grandchild. You will, therefore, go at once to the hospital of St. James, and there, or elsewhere, when you have found her, will pay to this poor girl the sum of fifty half nobles, expressing your sorrow—which, doubtless, you feel sincerely—for the evil you have occasioned."

Sir Simeon of Roydon bowed, with every appearance of respect; but there was a scowl upon his brow; and he could not refrain from asking, "May I inquire, Sire, whether this fine is imposed by the inquest, or whether it be the award of your Highness; for if—"

Henry's cheek flushed, and the impetuous spirit which had made him in early years strike the judge upon the bench, roused itself for a moment in his heart. It was conquered speedily, however; and he murmured to himself, "No, I will not act the tyrant. Sir Simeon," he continued, aloud, waving his hand, "the award is mine, as you say. It is my desire that this should be done. You will do it or not, as you think fit, for I will not strain the laws; but if it be not done, never present yourself before me again. That at the least I may require, sir, though the verdict of the jury can but affect the horse you rode."

"Your Highness did not hear me out," replied Roydon, who had now recovered the mastery of himself; "I did but presume to ask; because if such a fine had been imposed by the jury, I should have resisted it, as contrary to law; but at the command of your Highness, I pay it, not only with submission but with pleasure, as the only means I have of showing both my regret at what has taken place, and my eager desire to conform myself in all things to your will. Not an hour shall pass before you are certified that I have not only obeyed, but gone beyond your orders; and so I humbly take my leave."

The words were well and gracefully spoken; and Henry found no occasion to complain of the knight's demeanour; but still he was not satisfied that his obedience was the submission of the heart; for he knew right well that fair words, ay, and fair actions, too, are often but the cloaks of sly and subtle knavery; and the character of Sir Simeon of Roydon was not new to him. He replied merely, "So you shall do well, sir;" and bowed his head as a signal that he might depart.

The knight quitted his presence in no happy mood, perceiving right well that the monarch's favour, on which he had counted much, had been lost and not regained. He hated him for the clear-sighted penetration which had seen through his art; and he only doubted whether there was or was not a chance of still deceiving his sovereign, and recovering his good graces, by an appearance of zeal and devotion in obeying his commands.

"It is worth the trial," he thought; "and it shall be tried; but I shall soon find whether he continues to nourish such ill-will towards me; and if he do, my course must be shaped accordingly. Curses upon these beggarly vagrants! Who ever heard of King before who troubled his nobility about minstrels and tomblesteres? This smacks of the early tastes

of our magnanimous monarch, whose sole delight, within these two months, was in pot-house tipplers, and losel gamesters. He may assume a royal port and solemn manner, if he will; but the habit of years is not so easily conquered; and if he trip now, he is lost. Men were tired enough of his usurping father. A new prince carries the ever-changing multitude at his heels; but time will bring weariness, and weariness is soon changed into disgust. We shall see; we shall see; and the day of vengeance may come. In the meantime, of one, at least, I have had retribution; and this other shall not long escape—a rude, ballad-singing peasant, only fit for the brute sports of the bull-baiting, or the fair—a very franklin in spirit, and a yeoman in heart."

With thoughts,—which, as the reader may have perceived, had deviated from the King to Richard of Woodville,—with thoughts wavering with a strong inclination to bold evil, but chained down to mere knavery, for the time, by some remaining chances of success—for strange as it may seem, as many men are rendered cowards by hope as by fear—Sir Simeon of Roydon pursued his way to the hospital of St. James, on foot, having hastened to the presence of the King without waiting for his horses. As, still in deep and angry thought, he approached the gate and the old lodge, he raised his eyes somewhat suddenly at an advancing step, and beheld the form of a young girl, with her long dark eyelashes bent down till they rested on her cheek. He caught but a momentary glance as she hurried by; but Simeon of Roydon was quick and eager in his examination of all that is beautiful in mere form; and that glance was sufficient to rouse no very holy feelings. The rounded limbs, the small and delicate foot and ankle, the fine chiseled features, the graceful easy movements, the exquisite neck and bosom half hidden by the folds of the grey hood, were all marked in an instant; and as she seemed alone, without defence or protection, he hesitated for a moment whether to stop and speak to her; but while he paused, she was gone with a quick step; the gate of the convent was near, and, resisting the passing temptation, he walked on and rang the bell.

The porter slowly opened the gate; and, with the tone of careless and haughty indifference which has always marked the inferior personages of a court—I mean the inferior in mind, more than the inferior in rank or station—the knight said, "There was an old man killed near this spot last night, I think?"

"There was, noble sir," answered the porter, with a low reverence to his air of superiority; "the body has been moved to the chapel."

"I care nought about the body," rejoined Roydon. "He had a daughter or grand-daughter or something with him; where is she?"

"She has just gone forth, noble sir," replied the porter; "you must have passed her at the gate."

"Ha! what! a girl with a grey hood and a white coat, with some gold at the edge?" asked the knight.

"The same, noble sir," said the old man; "poor thing, she is sadly afflicted."

"Send her to me when she comes back, and I will comfort her," answered the visitor in a light tone.

"Nay, sir, she is none of those, I'll warrant," replied the porter, very little edified; "and I give no such messages here."

"Thou art a fool, old man," said Sir Simeon of Roydon. "Will she come back hither?"

"Doubtless she will," answered the other, "for better comfort than you can give."

"Pshaw! art thou a preacher?" demanded the knight, with a sneer. "The comfort that I have to give is gold, by the King's command. So tell her to come to Burwash House, close by the Temple gate, up the lane to the left, and ask for Simeon of Roydon. If I be not within, I will leave the money with a servant; but bid her come quickly, for I must tell the King as soon as his bounty is bestowed. When will she be here?"

"That I know not," answered the old man; "the prioress bade me give her admission to the parlour whenever she came, for the ladies the sisters have taken her case much to heart. But the young woman did not say when she would return. Perhaps it would be better for you to leave the money with the lady prioress herself, who would render it to her when she sees her."

"Give advice to those who ask it, my friend," replied Roydon. "I know best what are the King's commands and my duty; so tell her what I say on the part of his Highness, and let her come as speedily as may be."

The knight then turned, and, with a haughty step, took his way back to Burwash House, the London mansion of a distant kinsman, who, in reverence of his newly acquired wealth, permitted the heir of poor Catherine Beauchamp to inhabit it during his own absence from the capital.

Sir Simeon of Roydon was now enjoying to the full that which he had long earnestly desired—the prosperity of riches, which he had never before known; for his own estate had originally been small, and had soon been encumbered, under the influence of expensive tastes and vain ostentation. Unchastened by adversity, unreclaimed by experience, he was now living as much beyond his present, as he had previously lived beyond his former, fortune; and grooms and attendants of all kinds waited him at his dwelling, chosen from the scum of a great city, which always affords a multitude of serviceable knaves, ready to aid an heir to spend his inheritance, and, by obsequious compliance with all rash or vicious desires, to secure themselves a participation in the plunder, during the term of its existence. To some of these worthies, whom he found in the court, he gave orders for the immediate admission of poor Ella Brune as soon as she appeared; and then, betaking himself to a chamber on the first floor, he occupied himself for somewhat more than an hour in thinking over future plans, no inconsiderable portion of which referred to the gratification of many of the pleasant little passions, that, like strong drink, by turns stimulate and allay the thirst of a depraved mind. Revenge—or, rather, the gratification of hate, for revenge presupposes injury—was predominant, though ambition had a goodly share also.

To become that for which he thought himself well fitted, but towards which he had never hitherto been able to take one step—a great and prominent man—was one principal object:—to take a share in the mightier deeds of life, to rule and influence others, to command, to be looked up to, to receive authority and wield it at will. Oh, how often does that desire *to become a great man* render one a little man!—how often is it the source of littleness in those who might otherwise be great indeed! When the greatest philosopher that modern ages has produced declared, that "to rise to dignities we must submit to indignities," how powerful, to debase the mightiest mind, did that longing *to become a great man* show itself! How constantly, through his whole career, do we see it producing all that made him other than great! It was, and is ever, the result of the one grand fundamental error, the misappreciation of real greatness. And thus we desire to become great in the eyes of other men, not in our own—to win the applause of worms, not merit the approbation of God.

Such pitiful elevation was the only greatness coveted by

him of whom we speak; but that was not the only desire which moved him—he longed for indulgence of every kind, from which straitened circumstances had long debarred him —he thought of pleasures with the eagerness of a Tantalus, who had for years beheld them close to his lip, without the power of bringing them within his taste; and, like a famished beast, he was ready to fall upon the food of appetite wherever it could be found. But still cunning—both natural and that acquired from the ready teacher of all evil to inferior minds, poverty—was at hand to bring certain restraints, which wisdom and virtue were not there to enforce. There was a consciousness in his breast, that too great eagerness often disappoints its own desires, and that he was too eager; and, therefore, he resolved that he would be cautious too. But such resolutions usually fail somewhere; for cautiousness is a guardian who does not always watch, when she is without the companionship of rectitude.

Such reflections were still busily occupying his mind; and he had arrived at sincere regret for the rash and brutal act which he had committed the night before—not because it was evil, but because it was imprudent—when a page opened the door, and ushered Ella Brune into the room.

The poor girl knew not whom she was coming to see—she had taken no note of the face or form of him whose cruel carelessness had deprived her of the only support she had—she had not listened to the words that passed between him and Richard of Woodville—she stood before him unconscious that he was the slayer of her old companion. Let the reader mark that fact well. Nevertheless, as soon as she saw him she turned deadly pale, and her limbs trembled.

But Sir Simeon of Roydon took a smooth and pleasant tone; and as soon as the page was gone, and had closed the door, he asked, "They gave you my message, then, pretty maid?" At the same time he placed a stool for her, and motioned her to be seated.

"They told me, sir," she answered in a low tone, "that you had commands for me from the King."

"And so I have, fair maiden," replied Simeon of Roydon; "but, I pray you, sit. This has been a sad event—I grieve for it much. I was not aware, till this morning, that my runaway charger had done such damage."

"And were you the man?" demanded Ella Brune, suddenly raising her eyes to his face. As she did so, she found him gazing at her from head to foot, taking in all the beauties of

her face and form, as an experienced judge remarks the points of a fine horse; and she drew her hood farther over her brow, not well satisfied with the eager and passionate look of admiration which his countenance displayed.

"I was unfortunate enough to be so," answered Roydon, perceiving her gesture, and thinking it as well to put some little restraint upon himself, though he never dreamed that a poor minstrel's girl could seriously resist the solicitation of a man of wealth and station. "I regret it deeply," he continued, "but the brute overpowered me. By the King's commands, I bear you fifty half-nobles; here they are. And, for my own satisfaction, I will give you the same."

As he spoke, he held out a purse to her, but Ella Brune drew back. "The King's bounty," she said, "I will receive with gratitude; but, from you, I will take nothing."

"And, pray, why not, sweet girl?" asked Simeon of Roydon; "the King cannot grieve for what has happened half as much as I do, or be half as eager to comfort and console you. Nay, sit down, and speak to me;" and, taking her hand, he led her back to the stool much against her will. "I would fain hear what can be done for you," he added; "I fear you may be friendless and unprotected; and I long to make up to you, as far as possible, for the loss you have sustained."

"I am, indeed, alone in the world," replied the fair girl; "but not friendless, and unprotected, while I trust in God."

"Yes, but God uses human means," answered Roydon, who was every moment growing more eager in the pursuit, which at first had been but as the chase of a butterfly; "and you must let me be his instrument, as I have caused, unwillingly, this evil to befal you. I have a beautiful small cottage on my lands, where the trees fall round and shade it in the winter from the wind—in the summer from the sun. The woodbine and rose gather round the door, and a sparkling stream dances within sight. There, if you will accept such a refuge, you can live in peace and tranquillity, protected from all the harm and wrong that might happen to you in great cities; for you are too young and too lovely to escape wiles, and perhaps violence, if you are left without good ward, in such resorts of men as these."

A smile came upon the lip of Ella Brune, but it was of a very mingled and changeful expression. Perhaps the wakening of some old remembered dream of happy days might render it at first soft and gentle; and, the next instant, the

recollection of how that dream had faded might sadden; and then again, the transparency of his baseness mixed a touch of scorn with it, and she answered, "That can never be, sir. I seek no protection but that I have, and cannot accept of yours. I am able, as I am accustomed, to guard myself, and will do so still. I think you have mistaken me—but it matters not. I seek neither gold nor favour from you; and, if you would make atonement for bad deeds, it must be to God, not me."

As she spoke, she rose, and turned to quit the room; and Simeon of Roydon hesitated for a moment whether he should not detain her by force—for those were days of violence; and her very coldness had rendered the passion he began to feel towards her but the more impetuous. He remembered, however, that there might be those who expected her return; that the place whither she had gone was known at the monastery; and that the King's eye might be upon his conduct towards her. These calculations passed like lightning through his mind, and he chose his course in an instant.

"Stay!" he cried, "stay one minute more, sweet girl. I have not mistaken you at all. I would not even force my protection on you: but, at least, receive this; for I must tell the King that it is paid."

"His bounty," replied Ella, "I will not refuse, as I before said, and offer him my deepest thanks; but, from you, I will receive nothing."

"Well, then, take these fifty pieces," said her companion; "they are given by the King's command. We shall meet again, fair maid; and then, perhaps, you will know me better."

"I seek to know no more," she answered, taking the gold he gave: "I have known enough," and, turning to the door, she left him, murmuring to herself, "Would that the King had sent it by other hands."

Simeon of Roydon followed her to the gates, beckoning up two of his servants as he went. "Quick," he whispered; "you see that girl?—follow her wherever she goes: find out her name—her dwelling—every particular you can gather, and bring me your tidings with all speed."

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOURS OF JOY.

Probably there is a period in the life of every one—if it be not cut short in very early years, when the blossom is still upon the trees of existence—in which the heart is so depressed by a reiteration of those misfortunes which generally come in groups, that the unexpected announcement of an unnamed visitor causes us to look up with a feeling of dread, as if some new sorrow were about to be added to the list of those endured. But such was not yet the case with Richard of Woodville, for though many of the events which had lately passed, had tended to make him somewhat more grave and thoughtful than in younger days, yet neither griefs, nor anxieties, nor disappointments had been heavy enough to weigh down a spirit naturally buoyant. His heart might be called light and free; for, though burdened with some cares, and tied by the silver chain of love, yet hope, bright, vigorous, rarely-tiring hope, helped him to carry his load; and the bond between him and sweet Mary Markham was not one to fetter the energies of his mind, or to dim the brightness of expectation. But above all things his bosom was perfectly free from guile; and in a house so cleanly kept, there is always light, unless every window be closed by the hands of death or of despair.

He looked, therefore, to see who the stranger could be that asked for him, with some curiosity perhaps, but no alarm, and was surprised but well pleased, when the figure of honest Hugh of Clatford darkened the door.

"Ah, Hugh!" he exclaimed, "is that you? What has brought you to Westminster? Are you also going to seek service in foreign lands?"

"Faith, sir, I know not what I am going to do," replied the good yeoman; "I came up here with my lord, and wait his pleasure."

"With your lord!" exclaimed Woodville, in astonishment; "and what, in the name of fortune and all her freaks, has brought my uncle to Westminster?—Was he summoned to the coronation?"

"Good truth, noble sir, I know not," answered Hugh of Clatford. "He has not told me why he came; but I chanced

to meet your man Hob, and asked him where you were to be found, but to come and see you and how you fared."

"Thanks, Hugh, thanks!" replied Richard of Woodville.

> "'True friend findeth true friend wherever they follow,
> And summer's no summer that wanteth the swallow;'

But whom has my uncle with him?"

He would have fain asked if Mary Markham was near; but the question would not be spoken, and Hugh of Clatford saved him the trouble of farther inquiry. "He has brought no one but myself," he said, "and Roger Vale, and Martin the henchman, and one or two lads with the horses, and a page, and the Lady Mary—"

"Ah! and is that sweet lady here?" asked Woodville, in as calm and grave a tone as a very joyous heart could use. "But has he not brought my cousin Isabel?"

"No, good sooth," rejoined the yeoman; "he and the Lady Mary came off in haste on the arrival of a messenger from London."

"That is strange," said Richard of Woodville;—but then he thought that, perchance his friend Harry Dacre had sped well in his suit to Isabel, and that the old knight might have left her to cheer him at the hall. Nor was such a course unlikely in that age; for there were then fewer observances and stiff considerations of propriety than in later days, since rules and regulations more powerful, though but of air, than the locks and eunuchs of an Eastern harem, have tied down the most innocent intercourse of those who love, and every lady in the land is watched with the dragon's eyes of parental prudence. Love was then looked upon with reverence, and regarded as a safeguard rather than a peril. There was more confidence in virtue, more trust in honour.

After a short pause, Richard of Woodville inquired where his uncle was lodged; and to the great disappointment of his host, who, while he was still speaking with Hugh of Clatford, entered to set out the tables for the approaching meal, the young gentleman accompanied the good yeoman, fasting as he was, to visit good Sir Philip Beauchamp—as he said; but, in truth, to sun himself in Mary's eyes.

Fortune, though she be a spiteful jade, will occasionally favour true lovers; and she certainly showed herself particularly benign to Richard of Woodville in the present instance. Hurrying on with Hugh of Clatford, he made his way through the crowded streets of Westminster, till, at the outskirts of the town, near where now stands George Street,

he reached the gates of a large house in a garden, where Sir Philip Beauchamp had taken up his abode. With all due reverence he asked for his uncle; but he must not be looked upon as a very undutiful nephew, if we admit that he was not a little rejoiced to find that the good old knight had gone forth, leaving fair Mary Markham behind.

Guided by Hugh of Clatford, who very well understood all that was passing in the young gentleman's heart, Richard was soon in his fair lady's bower; and certainly Mary's bright face expressed quite as much pleasure to see him as he could have desired. It expressed surprise also, however; and after chiding him, not very harshly, for a sweet liberty he took with her arched lips, she exclaimed, "But how are you here, Richard? I thought you were firm at Meon, polishing armour and trying horses."

Now Richard of Woodville, as soon as he heard that Mary was in the same city with himself, had formed his own conclusions in regard to various matters that had puzzled him the day before; and he answered, gaily, "What, deceiver! Do you think I do not know your arts? You would have me believe you were ignorant that I was here, and must tease your poor lover twice in the course of yesterday, by letting him hear your voice, yet hiding the face that he loves best, from his sight?"

"Nay, dear Richard," replied Mary, with a look of still greater surprise than before; "you are speaking riddles to me. You could not hear my voice yesterday, at least in Westminster—unless, indeed, it were late at night; and then it must have been in sad, dolorous tones, for I was very tired. We did not reach this place till three hours after dark. But what is it you mean, by daring to call Mary a deceiver, when you know right well I could not cheat you into thinking that I did not love you, though I tried hard to look as demure as a cat in the sunshine?"

"Are you sincere now, Mary?—are you telling me the truth?" asked Richard, still half inclined to doubt; but the moment after, he added, "Yet I know you are, my Mary, without guile. Truth gives you half your beauty, Mary; it lights your eyes, it smiles upon your lips. Yet this is very strange; and I thought that I had discovered the key to a mystery which must puzzle me still. But hear what has happened, and you shall judge;" and he proceeded to relate the injunctions which had been twice laid upon him the day before, by some unseen acquaintance in the crowd.

Mary Markham was not less surprised and puzzled than himself, especially as he persisted in asserting the words had been spoken by a female voice. But they soon abandoned that topic, to turn to others of deeper interest to their own two hearts—the cause of Sir Philip Beauchamp's journey to the capital, and the future fate of his fair companion.

"In truth, Richard," said Mary, in answer to some of his questions, "I am well nigh as ignorant as yourself of what is about to happen. All I know is, that Sir Philip told me I should probably soon see my father again."

"And who is your father, my sweet Mary?" asked Woodville, with a smile.

Mary gazed at him for an instant, with a look of touched and gratified affection, and then asked, "And did Richard of Woodville really seek poor Mary Markham's hand, then, without knowing aught of her state and station?—was he willing to take her dowerless, friendless, stationless, almost nameless?"

"Good faith, dear Mary," answered Woodville, "I should be right glad to take you any way I could get you; and if dower, or station, or friends, or aught else stand in the way, even down to this pretty robe whose hem I kiss, I pray you, Mary, cast it off! I shall be right glad to have you in your kirtle, if it be but of hodden grey."

Mary Markham smiled and blushed; and her bright, merry eyes acquired a softer and more glistening light from the dew of happy emotion that spangled her long eyelashes. "Well, Richard," she said, "I do not love you the less for that. 'Tis a bold speech, perhaps, and one that I should not make; but once having owned what I feel, why should I hide it now?"

"Fie on those who would blame you, dearest lady," answered Woodville: "who should feel shame for love? The brightest and the best of human feelings, surely, is no cause of shame; but we may all say, with the great poet—

> "'O sunn'is life! O Jov'is daughter dear,
> Pleasaunce of love! O godely debonaire
> In gentle hearts aye ready to repaire,
> O very cause of health and of gladnesse,
> Iheried be thy might and godenesse.'"

"I cannot answer why, Richard," replied Mary, "but I know it is so, that all women feel some shame to own they love; and many affect more shame than they really feel. But I will not do so, dear Richard; for I think it is disho-

nesty to feign aught. I know I did feel shame, when one day, as we sat beside the river under the green trees, you won me to say more than I ever thought I could; and all that night, when I thought upon it, my cheek burned. But yet, in the moment of trial, I felt bold; and when your uncle asked me, I told him all. Nor do I see why I should conceal it now, even if I could, when you are about to go far, and that may be your only consolation in danger and in difficulty."

"It will be my strength and my support, dear Mary," answered Woodville; "and I do think that if I could but win a promise from you to be mine, it would so nerve my heart and arm in the hour of strife, that all men should own I had won you well—Say, will you promise, my sweet lady?"

"I will promise that I will, if I may," replied Mary; "but alas! Richard, the entire fulfilment of that promise must depend upon another. We poor women have but little power, even over our own fate and persons; but I will love none but you, Richard, wherever I go; and you will not doubt that love, though it be spoken so freely?"

"Nay, Heaven forbid!" said Richard of Woodville; "and were it not that you are my uncle's ward, I would put that love, dear Mary, to the proof, by asking you to fly with me and seek out some friendly priest who would bind our fate so fast together, that it would take greater power than any one in the land can boast, to sever it again. But I would not be ungrateful to one who has been a father to me."

"Nor must I be ungrateful, either to him or to my own father, Richard," replied Mary Markham; "you would not love me long if I could be so."

"I know you cannot, Mary," answered her lover; "but tell me who he is, Mary, that I may try to win him to hear my suit. I knew not that your father was alive—unless, indeed, the idle gossip—but no more of that. Whoever he be, I will trust to merit his esteem, and surely his daughter's love will be no bad commendation to him. I have hopes, too, of advancement, if ambition be his passion, such, indeed, as I have never had before. The King—he who was with us not a month ago as Hal of Hadnock—"

"Ay, Dacre told us who he was," cried Mary Markham.

"The King, he shows me great favour," continued Woodville, "and has given me letters to many at the court of Burgundy, promising to send for me, too, as soon as he has service for me here. With a true heart, and no unpractised

hand, I do not fear that I shall fail of winning honour; and though I be but a poor gentleman, yet, as I do know that riches or poverty would make no difference in Mary Markham to me, so I cannot believe that it will change me in her eyes."

"Oh no!" she answered, but then added, with a sigh, "but my father, Richard! It is long since I have seen him, yet he was kind and noble, just and true, if I remember right. I recollect him well, with his grey hair, changed more by sorrow than time. I thought you knew the whole, for Isabel does; but I promised faithfully not to speak of my fate or his to any one, for reasons that he judged sufficient, when he gave me into good Sir Philip's charge; and I must not break my word even for you, Richard."

"Well, it matters not," answered Woodville; "certainly I would fain know who he is, for then I might court him as a lover does his bride, for Mary's sake: but yet you must keep your promise to him, and to me, too; and whenever you are free to speak, you must give me tidings, dear girl; for in all the thousand chances of this world, I might mar my own hopes, even while seeking to fulfil them."

"I will, I will," replied Mary Markham; "but hark! I hear your uncle's step, Richard. I will but add one word more to cheer you. Perhaps, if I judge right, we may not be so long ere we meet again, as you suppose—and now, God prosper you, my own true squire."

As she spoke, the good old knight, Sir Philip Beauchamp, entered the room, with a grave and somewhat perplexed air. It soon became evident, however, that whatever annoyed or embarrassed him, it was not the presence of his nephew; for he greeted him kindly, holding out his hand to him, saying, "Ay, you here, foolish boy!—still the moth and the candle! But if you needs must love, why, let it lead you to honour and renown. What brought you to London? To buy arms?"

"No, sir; to see the King," replied his nephew. "He sent me a messenger, bearing letters for me to the court of Burgundy, and gave me to understand that I might come to visit him, if I would."

The old knight, in his meditative mood, seemed to catch some of Woodville's words, and miss the others. "Letters to the court of Burgundy," he said. "Well! from Harry of England, they should smooth thy path, boy. Would to Heaven, you two were not lovers!—Not that I would speak ill of love; 'tis the duty of every gentleman to vow his ser-

vice to some fair lady. At least, as it was so in my young day; but we have sorely declined since then—sorely, sorely, nephew of mine; and love was then quite a different affair from now—when it must needs end in marriage, or worse. It was a high and ennobling passion in those times, leading knights and gentlemen to seek praise, and do high deeds; not for their own sakes, but for the honour of the ladies whom they served, nor requiring reward even from them, but for pure and high affection, and the pleasure of exalting them. Thus, many a man loved a lady—either placed far above him, or removed from his reach by being wedded to another—without sin, or shame, or presumption; for love, as I have said, was a high and ennobling feeling in those days, which taught men to do what is right, not what is wrong."

"Well, my noble uncle," replied Richard of Woodville, "and so it may be now; and it will have the same effect with me. But one thing I do know, that I would rather do high deeds to exalt my own wife, than another man's: I would rather serve a lady that I may win, than a lady I have no right to seek. Methinks it is both more honest and more safe; and, by God's blessing, I will win her, too, if I live long enough, and have fair play."

The old knight smiled. "Thou art a jesting coystrel, Dickon," he said; "and yet not a bad man at arms either. But times are changed, I tell thee, and not for the better. Thou thinkest according to the day, and cannot understand the past. When goest thou over seas, boy?"

"In a few days, sir," answered Richard of Woodville. "I think before a week be out."

Mary Markham's cheek turned a little pale, and the old knight meditated for a moment or two; after which he asked his nephew when he intended to quit London? Richard replied, that he went on the following morning; and Sir Philip, who had found a sad vacancy in the hall since Richard had left them for a time, and poor Catherine for ever, required that he should stay and keep them company for the rest of the day.

"Heaven knows, my poor Mary," he said, "how long we may have to remain in this place; and we shall soon find it dull enough. The people whom I expected to meet, have not yet appeared, and no tidings of them have come; so we may as well keep this idle boy to make us merry; and if he must go buy arms or lace jerkins for the court of Burgundy, why we will go with him to Gutherun's Lane and the Jury;

and you shall ride your white palfrey for once along Cheape, with your gay side-saddle quilted with gold; though in my young days—before King Richard married Anne of Bohemia —never a lady in the land saw so foolish a contrivance."

It may well be supposed that neither Mary Markham nor Richard of Woodville was very much averse to such a proposal; and the rest of the day passed in that April-morn happiness which all must have felt, ere parting with those we love; when the cloudy thought of the dreary morrow comes hourly sweeping over the sunshine of the present, yet making the light seem more bright for the passing shadow. More than once, too, the lovers were left for awhile alone; and every moment added to their sweet store of vows and promises. Much was also told that they had not had time to tell before, though it was still spoken in rambling and unconnected form—the one predominant feeling always intruding, and calling their thoughts and words back to what was passing in their own hearts.

How many bitter moments pay for our sweet ones in this life! and yet how willing are we all to make the purchase, whatever be the price! The ambitious spirit of enjoyment is upon us, and we must still enlarge the sphere of our delight, though—as when a conqueror stretches the bounds of his empire, and thereby only exposes a wider frontier to attack—each new hope, each new pleasure, each new possession, but lays us open to loss, regret, and disappointment. It is a sad view of human life; but Richard of Woodville and Mary Markham found its truth when they came to feel how much more bitter was their parting, for the few sweet hours of happiness they had enjoyed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WRONG.

The sun, scarce a hand's breadth above the sky, was nevertheless shining with beams as bright and warm as in the summer, when Richard of Woodville mounted his horse in the courtyard of the inn at Charing, and, followed by his two yeomen and his page, rode out, after receiving the valedictory

speeches of the host and hostess, who, with a little crowd, composed of drawers and maidens, and some of their other guests, watched his departure, and commented upon his strong yet graceful limbs, and his easy management of his charger, prognosticating that he would prove stout in battle-field, and fortunate in hall and bower. Near the fine chaste cross at Charing—which stood hard by the spot where the grand libel upon British taste, called Trafalgar Square, now stands—Woodville paused for a moment, and letting his eye run past its grey fretwork, gazed down in the direction of the palace and the Abbey, hesitating whether he should take the shorter road by the convent of St. James, or, once more passing through Westminster, ride under the windows of fair Mary Markham, for the chance of one parting glance. I need not tell the reader how the question was decided; but as he turned his horse's head towards the palace, he saw a female figure standing upon the lower step of the cross, with the hood, then usually worn by women when out, drawn far over the face. The beautiful form, however, the small foot and ankle appearing from beneath the short kirtle, and the wild peculiar grace of the attitude, taken together, showed him at once that it was poor Ella Brune; and he was riding forward to speak with her, when she herself advanced and laid her hand upon his horse's neck.

"I have been watching for you, noble sir," she said, "to bid you adieu before you part, and to give you thanks from a poor but true heart."

"Nay, you should not have waited here, Ella," he replied; "why did you not come to the inn?"

"I did, yesterday at vespers," answered the girl; "but you were abroad; and the people laughed, as if I had done a folly. Your men told me, however, you were going this morning at daybreak, and so I waited here; for I would fain ask you one boon."

"And what is that, Ella?" inquired Woodville; "if it be possible to grant, it shall not be refused; for I have so little to give, that I must be no niggard of what I have."

"You can grant it," replied the girl, with a bright smile; "and you will be a niggard indeed if you do not; for it is what can do you no harm, and may stead me much in case of need. It is but to tell me whither you go, and when, and how."

"That is easily said, my fair maiden," answered Woodville. "I go first to my own place at Meon; then to the

Court of Burgundy, at the end of six days; and, as I would not cross through France, I go by sea from Dover to a town called Nieuport, on the coast of Flanders. But say, is there aught I can do for you before I send the man I told you of, to give you what little assistance I can?"

"Send him not, send him not," cried the girl; "I am now rich—almost too rich, thanks to your generous interference with our good King. He sent me a large sum, by the hands of the bad knight, who killed the poor old man."

"Ay!" said Richard of Woodville; "and did you see this Sir Simeon of Roydon, my poor Ella? Beware of him; for he is not one to understand you rightly, I fear."

"I am aware of him," answered the minstrel's girl; "and I abhor him. He is a dark fearful man—but no more of that; I shall never see him more, I trust, for his eyes chill my blood. He looked at me as I love not men should look—not as you do, kindly and pitifully; but I know not how—it can be felt, not told."

"I understand you, Ella," replied Richard of Woodville; "and his acts are like his looks. He has made more than one unhappy heart in many a cottage that once was blithe. I grieve the King sent him to you."

"Oh, 'twill do no harm," cried the girl. "I shall not long be here; and I know him well. Would that I were not a woman!"

"What! would you avenge the wrong he did on that sad evening?" asked Woodville, with a smile, to think how feeble that small hand would prove in strife.

"No, not for that," she replied; "for I would try to forgive; but if I were not what I am you would take me with you in your train, and then I should be safe and happy."

"I trust you may be so still, even as a woman, poor girl," answered Richard of Woodville; and, after a few more words of kindness and comfort, he bade her adieu. Ella Brune's bright eyes glistened; and, perhaps, she found it difficult to speak the parting words, for she said no more, but, catching her young protector's hand, she pressed her lips upon it, and drew back to let him pass.

It was impossible for Richard of Woodville not to feel touched and interested; but he was not one to mistake her. He knew—not indeed by the hard teaching of experience, but by the intuitive perception of a feeling heart—how the unfortunate cling to those who show them kindness, and could distinguish between the love of gratitude and that of passion

He had purposely spoken gently and tenderly to her; and, in proportion as he could do little to afford her substantial aid, had tried to make his words and manner consoling and strengthening; and he thought, "If any one had acted so to me, I should feel towards him as this poor girl now feels in my case. Heaven guard her, poor thing, for hers is a sad fate!"

In such meditations he rode on; but we will not at present follow him on his way, turning rather to poor Ella Brune, who stood by the cross gazing after him, till his horse taking a road to the right, about two hundred yards before it reached the palace gate, was soon hidden by the trees, just at the entrance of the town of Westminster.

With a deep sigh, she then bent her steps along the road leading by the bank of the river towards the gate of the Temple, which was still in a somewhat ruinous state from the attack made upon it in 1381. As she went she looked not at the houses and gardens on either side—she marked not the procession which came forth, with cross and banner, from the convent on the right, nor the gay train that issued out of the gates of a large embattled house on the left; but separating herself from the people, who turned to gaze or hastened to follow, she made her way on, seeking the little inn where she dwelt.

There were two other persons, however, who followed the same course—men with swords by their side, and bucklers on their shoulder, and a snake embroidered on the mourning habits that they wore. But Ella saw them not—she was too deeply occupied with her own dark thoughts. She seemed alone in the wide world—more alone than ever, since Richard of Woodville had left the capital; and to be so is both sad and perilous. How strange, how lamentable it is, that society, that great wonderful confused institution, springing from man's necessity for mutual aid and support, provides no prop, no stay for those who are left alone in the midst of it; none to counsel, none to help, none to defend against the worst of all evils—temptation to vice. Of the body it takes some care; we must not cut, we must not strike the flesh; we must not enthral it; we must not kill. But we may wound, injure, destroy the spirit if we can, even at our pleasure. For substantial things, we multiply regulations, safe-guards, penalties; for the mind, on which all the rest so much depends, we provide none. The philosophy of legislation has yet a great step to advance—a step, perhaps, that may never—perhaps that can never—be taken; though of one

thing we may be sure—that, till the great Eutopian dream is realized, and either by education, or some other means, a safeguard is provided for the minds of men as well as their bodies and their property, all the iron laws that can be enacted, will prove insufficient for the protection of those more tangible things which we think most easily defended. To regulate and guard the mind, especially in youth, is to turn the river near its source, and to ensure that it shall flow on in peace and bounty to the end; but to leave it unguided, and yet by law to strive to restrain man's actions, is to put weak floodgates against a torrent that we have suffered to accumulate. But no more of this. Perhaps what has been already said is too much, and out of place.

Yet, to return. It is strange and sad that society does afford no stay, no support, to those who are left alone in the wide world; nay, more, that to be so left, seems in a great degree to sever the bond between us and society. "He must have some friends. Let him apply to them," we are apt to say, whenever one of these solitary ones comes before us, and whether it is advice, assistance, or defence, that is needed. "He must have some friends!"—It is a phrase in constant use; and, in our own hearts, we go on to say, "if he have not, he must have lost them by his own fault;" and yet how many events may deprive man, and much more frequently woman, of the only friends possessed!

Poor Ella Brune felt that she was indeed alone; that there was no one to whom she could apply for anything that the heart and spirit of the bereaved and desolate might need. She knew, that had she been a leper, or halt, or blind, or fevered, she could have found those who would have tended, cured, supported her; but there was no comfort, no aid, for her loneliness; and scorn, or coldness, or selfish passion, or greedy knavery, would have met her, had she asked any one, in the wide crowd through which she passed, "Which way shall I turn my footsteps? how shall I bend my course through life?"

She felt it deeply, bitterly, and, as I have said, walked on full of her own sad thoughts, while the numbers round her grew less and less. At length, in the sort of irregular street that, even then, began to stretch out from the edge of Farringdon, without the walls, into the country towards Charing, she was left with none near her but the two men of whom we have spoken, and an old woman, walking slowly on before. The men seemed to notice no one, and conversed

with each other in an under tone, till, in the midst of the highway, a little beyond St. Clement's well, one or two small wooden houses appeared built in the middle of the high road, with the end of a narrow lane leading up to the Old Temple in Oldbourne, and the house of the Bishop of Lincoln. There, however, one of them advanced a step, and spoke a word to Ella Brune, over her shoulder.

"Whither away, pretty maiden?" he said. "Are you not going to see the batch of country nobles who have come up to do homage?"

"I am going home," answered Ella Brune, gravely; "and want no company;" and she hurried her pace to get rid of him. The next instant the other man was by her side, and taking her arm roughly, he said, "You must come with us first, our lord wishes to speak with you."

Ella Brune struggled to disengage herself, saying, "Let me go, sir; if your lord wishes to speak with me, it must be at some other time. I have people expecting me hard by. Let me go, I say."

"Ay, we know all about it," rejoined the man, still keeping his hold, and drawing her towards the mouth of the lane. "You live at the Falcon, pretty mistress; but you must go with us first."

The sounds behind her had caused the old woman to turn round the moment before, and, seeing Ella struggling to free herself from the man who held her, she turned to remonstrate, exclaiming, "What are you about, sirs? Let the young woman go!"

"Get you gone, old beldame!" cried the other man, thrusting her back. "What is it to you?" and at the same time he seized Ella by the other arm, and hurried her on, in spite of her resistance.

"Beldame, indeed!" exclaimed the old woman, gazing after them. "Marry, thou art not civil. If thou callest me so, I will call thee Davy.* I will see whither they go, however;" and thus saying, at the utmost speed she could master, she followed the men who were dragging poor Ella Brune along, calling in vain for help—for the houses in that part of the suburb were few, and principally consisted either of the large gothic mansions of the nobility, shut in within their own gates and surrounded by gardens, or the inns of prelates, isolated in the same manner. Whither they were

* A common expression of the lower classes of Londoners in old times.

dragging her, the old woman could not divine: for she thought it unlikely that any of the persons who dwelt in that neighbourhood would sanction such a violent act. Ella herself, however, knew right well, for she had taken the same road the day before, on her brief visit to Sir Simeon of Roydon. Peril and wandering, and sad chances of various kinds, such as seldom are the lot of one so young, had taught her to remark every particular that passed before her eyes with a precision which fixed things in her memory that might have escaped the sight of others; and she had seen the snake embroidered on the breast and back of the knight's servants, and recognised the badge instantly on those who held her.

As she expected, the men stopped at the gates of the house, which were open, and dragged her into the court; but her cries and her resistance ceased the moment she had reached that place, for she knew that they were both in vain, and made up her mind from that moment to the course which she had to pursue.

"Ha, ha! pretty maiden," said the man who had first spoken to her. "You are now willing to go, are you? Our lord is not lightly to be refused a visit from any fair dame. Come, come, I can manage her now, Pilcher; you stay at the foot of the stairs. Will you come willingly, girl, or must we carry you?"

"I will come," answered Ella Brune; "not willingly, but because I must;" and, with the man still holding her by the arm, she mounted one of the flights of stairs which led straight from the court-yard to the rooms above. Following a long corridor, or gallery, lighted by a large window at the end, the man led her from the top of the stairs towards the back part of the house, and, opening a door on the right, bade her go in. After one hasty glance around, which showed her that it was vacant, she entered the small cabinet which was before her, and the door was immediately shut and locked. She now found herself in a dark and gloomy chamber, which probably had been originally intended either for secret conferences, or for a place of meditation and prayer, where the eye could not distract the mind by catching any of the objects without; for the only window which it possessed was so high up in the wall, that the sill was above the eyes of any person of ordinary height. There was but one door, too—that by which she had entered; and the whole of the walls of the room was covered with black oak,

of which also the beams overhead were formed. A few chairs and a small table composed the only furniture which it contained; and Ella paused in the midst, leaning upon the table in deep thought. Her mind, indeed, was bent only on one point. What were the purposes of Sir Simeon of Roydon, she did not even ask herself; for she knew right well that they were evil. Nor did she consider what she should answer, or how she should act; for a strong and resolute mind judges and decides with a rapidity marvellous in the eyes of the slow and hesitating; and her determination was already formed. Her only inquiry was, what were the means of escape from the chamber in which she had been placed, what was its position in regard to the apartments which she had visited on the previous day, and which had appeared to be those usually occupied by Roydon himself.

After thinking for some moments, and retracing with the aid of memory every step she had taken in the house, both on that morning and the day before, she judged, and judged rightly, that the chamber in which she had seen the knight must join that in which she now stood, though she had reached it by another entrance. The sound of voices, which she soon after heard speaking in a different direction from the gallery, confirmed her in that belief; for, though she could not distinguish any of the words, she felt convinced that the tones were those of Sir Simeon of Roydon, and of the man who had brought her thither.

At length the speakers ceased, a door opened and shut, and then the key was turned in the lock of that which gave entrance to the room where she was confined. As she expected, the next moment Simeon of Roydon stood before her, bearing a sort of laughing triumph in his face, which only increased her abhorrence. He was advancing quickly, as if to take her hand, but she drew back, with her eyes fixed upon him, saying, "Come not too near, sir. I am somewhat dangerous at times, when I am offended."

"Why, what folly is this, my sweet Ella!" said the knight; "my people tell me that you have resisted like a young wolf."

"You may find me more of a wolf than you suppose," replied Ella Brune, coldly.

"Nay," answered Sir Simeon, "we have ways of taming wolves—but I seek nothing but your good and happiness, foolish girl. Is it not much better for you to live in comfort

and luxury, with rich garments, and dainty food, and glowing wine, to lie soft, and have no task, but to sing and play and please yourself, than to wander about over the wide world, the sport of 'prentices, or the companion of ruffians?"

"There are ruffians in all stations," rejoined Ella Brune; "else had I not been here."

The cheek of the knight glowed with an angry spot; but then again he laughed the moment after, in a tone more of mockery than of merriment, saying, "We will tame thee, pretty wolf, we will tame thee. Thou showest thy white teeth; but thou wilt not bite."

"Be not sure of that," answered Ella Brune. "I know well how to defend myself, should need be, and have done so before now."

"Well, we will see," replied Sir Simeon; "it takes some time to break a horse or hound, or train a hawk; and you shall have space allowed you. All soft and kindly entertainment shall you have. With me shall you eat and drink, and talk and sing, if you will. You shall have courtship, like a lady of the land, to try whether gentle means will do. But mark me, pretty Ella, if they will not, we must try others. I am resolved that you shall be mine by force, if not by kindness."

"You dare not use it," answered Ella Brune.

"And why not?" demanded the knight, with a haughty smile; "I have done more daring things than vanquish a coy maiden."

"I know you have," said Ella Brune, in a grave and fearless tone; "but I will tell you why not. First, because, whatever be your care, it would come to the King's ears, and you would pay for it with your head. Next, because I carry about me wherewithal to defend myself;" and, putting her hand into her bosom, she drew forth a small short broad-bladed knife, in a silver case. "This is my only friend left me here," she continued; "and you may think, perchance, most gallant knight, and warrior upon women, that this, in so weak a hand as mine, is no very frightful weapon. But, let me tell you, that it was tempered in distant lands—ay, and anointed too; and you had better far give your heart to the bite of the most poisonous snake that crawls the valley of Egypt, than receive the lightest scratch from this. The hilt is always at hand—so, beware!"

"Oh, we have antidotes," replied the knight; "antidotes for everything but love, sweet maid—and I swear, by your own

bright eyes, that you shall be mine—so 'tis vain to resist. You shall have three days of tenderness; and then I may take a different tone."

As he spoke, some one knocked for the second time —the first had been unheeded. The knight turned to the door, and opened it, demanding impatiently, "What is it?"

"The Lord Combe and Sir Harry Alsover are in the court, desiring to speak with you," replied the servant who appeared.

"Well, take them up to the other chamber," answered the knight; and, without saying more to his fair captive, he quitted the room, and once more locked the door.

The moment he was in the corridor, however, he stopped, saying, in a meditative tone, "Stay, Easton." He hesitated for an instant, asking himself whether it were worth his while to pursue this course any farther, for a low minstrel girl, against such unexpected resistance.

The hand of Heaven almost always, in its great mercy, casts obstacles in the way of the gratification of our baser passions, which give us time for thought and for repentance; so that, in almost every case, if we commit sin or crime, it is with the perverse determination of conquering both impediments and conviction. Conscience is seldom, if ever, left unaided by circumstances. But the wicked find, in those very circumstances which oppose their course, motives for pursuing it more fiercely.

"No!" said Sir Simeon of Roydon, to himself—"By —! she shall not conquer me!—Tell the King!—She shall never have the means; for I will either tame her, till she be but my bird, to sing what note I please, or I will silence her tongue effectually. To be conquered by a woman!—No, no! She is very lovely; and her very lion look is worth all the soft simpering smiles on earth. Hark ye, Easton: there is a druggist, down by the Vintry, with whom I have had some dealings in days of yore. This girl has a poisoned dagger about her, which must be got from her. 'Tis a marvel she used it not on you, as you brought her along, for she drew it forth on me but now. The man's name is Tyler; and he would sell his soul for gold. Tell him that I have need of some cunning drug to make men sleep—to sleep, I say—understand me, not to die: to sleep so sound, however, that a light touch, or a low tone, would not awaken them. It must have as little taste as may be, that we may put it in

her drink, or in her food; and then, while she sleeps, we'll draw the lion's teeth. He will give you anything for a noble;" and, after these innocent directions, the knight betook himself to the chamber whither he had directed his friends to be brought, and was soon in full tide of laughter and merriment at all the idle stories of the Court.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REMEDY.

Nearly opposite to the old, half ruined gate of the Temple, there commenced, in the days I speak of, a very narrow lane, which wound up northward, till it joined the place now called Holborn, passing, in its course, under the walls of the inn, or house, of the Bishop of Lincoln, round his garden wall, and through the grounds of the Old Temple house, inhabited by the Knights Templars, before they built a dwelling for themselves, by the banks of the Thames. This Temple house, still called the Old Temple in the reign of Henry V., had been abandoned by the brethren in the year 1184, or thereabout. For some time it was used to lodge any of the fraternity who might visit England from foreign countries, when the new building was too full to afford them accommodation; but gradually this custom ceased, even before the suppression of the Order, and at its dissolution the Old Temple fell into sore decay. When the lands of the Templars were afterwards granted to the Knights of St. John, certain portions of the building, and several of the out-buildings, were granted by them to various artisans, who found it more convenient to carry on their several pursuits beyond the actual precincts of the city of London. One large antique gate, of heavy architecture, with immense walls, and with rooms in either of the two towers which flanked the lane I have mentioned, was tenanted by an armourer, who had erected his stithy behind, and who stored his various completed arms in the chamber on the right of the gate, where the porter had formerly lodged. Over the window of this room was suspended, under a rude penthouse of straw, to keep it from the rain, a huge casque, indicative of

the tenant's profession; and, at about eight o'clock of the same morning on which Richard of Woodville quitted London, a little cavalcade, consisting of a tall gaunt old man on a strong black horse, a young lady on a white genet, and three stout yeomen, rode slowly up to the gate-house, and drew their bridles there, pausing to gaze for a moment or two through the deep arch at the forge beyond, where the flame glowed and the anvil rang, throwing a red glare into the shadowy doorway, and drowning the sound of the horses' feet.

"Halloo! Launcelot Plasse!" cried old Sir Philip Beauchamp, in as loud a tone as he thought needful to call the attention of the person he wanted—"halloo!"

But the cyclops within went on with their hammering; and, after another ineffectual effort to make them hear, the good knight called up his men to hold the horses, and lifting Mary Markham as lightly to the ground as if she had been but the weight of a feather, he said, "We must go in and bellow in this deaf man's ear, till we outdo his own noise. Stay here, Mary, I will rouse him;" and, advancing through the open gate, he seized the bare arm of the armourer, exclaiming, "What, Launcelot! wouldst thou brain me?—Why, how now, man! has the roaring of thine own forge deafened thee?"

The elderly white-headed man to whom he spoke turned round and gazed at him, leaning his strong muscular arm upon his hammer, and wiping the drops from his brow. "By St. Jude!" he cried, after a moment's consideration, "I think it is Sir Philip Beauchamp. Yet your head is as white as the ashes, and when I knew him it was a grizzled black, like pauldrons traced with silver lines; and you are mighty thin and bony for stout Sir Philip, whose right hand would have knocked down an ox!"

"Fifteen years, Launcelot! fifteen years!" answered the knight; "they bend a stout frame, as thou beatest out a bit of iron; and, if my head be white, thy black hairs are more easy to be counted than found. Yet both our arms might do some service in their own way yet."

"Well, I am glad to see you again, noble knight," replied the armourer; "though I thought that it would be no more, before you and I went our ways to dust. But, what lack you? There must be some wars toward, to bring an old knight to the stithy; for well I wot, you are not going to buy a tilting suit, or do battle for a fair lady. God send us

some good wholesome wars right soon! We have had nothing lately, but the emprise of the Duke of Clarence. King Harry the Fourth got tired of his armour; pray Heaven, his son love the weight better, or I must let the forge cool, and that were a shame."

"Nay, 'tis not for myself," replied Sir Philip. "I have more arms, Launcelot, than ever I shall don in life again. My next suit—unless the King make haste—will be in the chancel of the church at Abbot's Ann. What I want is for my nephew, Dickon of Woodville; he is going to foreign lands, in search of renown; and I would fain choose him a suit myself, for you know I am somewhat of a judge in steel."

"You were always accounted so, noble sir," replied the armourer, with a grave and important face; "and, if you had not been a knight, might have taken my trade out of my hands. But whither does Childe Richard go? We must know that, for every land has its own arms; and it would not do to give him for Italy what is good for France, nor for Palestine what would suit Italy."

The old knight informed him that his nephew was first to visit Burgundy; and the armourer exclaimed, with a well satisfied air, "Then I can provide him to a point; for I have Burgundian arms all ready, even to flaming swords, if he must have them; but 'tis a foolish and fanciful weapon, far less serviceable than the good straight edge and point. But come, Sir Philip, let us go into the armoury. 'Tis well nigh crammed full, for gentlemen buy little; and yet I go on hammering with my men, till I have put all the money that I got in the wars, into arms."

Thus saying, he covered himself with the leathern jerkin, which he had cast off while at work, and returned with his old acquaintance to the room in which the various pieces of armour, that he kept ready, were preserved. Sir Philip called Mary Markham to assist in the choice; but it soon became evident to both, that no selection could be made in good Launcelot Plasse's armoury—for not only was the room, to their eyes, as dark as the pit of Acheron, but the armour was piled up in such confused heaps, that it was hardly possible to take a step therein without stumbling over breast-plate or basinet, pauldrons or brassières.

"Fie, Launcelot, fie!" cried Sir Philip; "this is a sad deranged show. Why, a stout man-at-arms always keeps his armour in array."

"When he has room and time, Sir Philip," answered the man; "but here I have neither. However, you and the fair lady go forth under the arch, and I will bring you out what is wanted. Here, knave Martin," he continued, calling one of his men from the forge, "bring out the great bench, and set it under the gate, quick!—What is your nephew's height, Sir Philip?"

"What my own used to be," replied the old knight; "six feet and half an inch—and there is his measure round the waist."

The bench was soon brought forward, being nothing else than a large solid table of some six inches thick; and by it Sir Philip Beauchamp and fair Mary Markham took their station, while Launcelot Plasse, with the aid of one of his men, dug out from the piles within, various pieces of armour which he thought might suit the taste of his old customer, laying them down at the door, to be brought forward as required. The first article, however, that he carried to the bench, was a cuirass of one piece, evidently old—for not only was it somewhat rusty about the angles, but in the centre there was a large rough-edged hole.

"Why, what is this?" exclaimed Sir Philip; "this will never do—"

"Nay, it has done, and left undone enough," replied the armourer. "I brought it but to show you. In that placcate was killed Harry Hotspur. I do not say that was the hole that let death in; for men aver that it was a stab in the throat with a coustel, when he was down, that slew him; but the blow that made *that* bore him to the ground, otherwise Shrewsbury field might have gone differently. Now I will fetch the rest. You see, fairest lady, what gentlemen undergo for the love of praise, and your bright eyes."

Thus saying, he took back the breast-plate, and brought forward, supported on his arm, one of the bascinets or casques worn in the field, which were lighter and considerably smaller than the jousting helmets. It was of a round or globular shape, with a small elevation at the top, in which to fix the feathers then usually displayed; and on the forehead was a plate, or band of white enamel, inscribed with the words, "Ave Maria." Sir Philip Beauchamp made some objections to the form; but Mary Markham, after she had read the inscription, pronounced in favour of the bascinet; and the armourer himself had so much to say of its defensive qualities, of the excellent invention of making the ventaille rise by plates

from below, and of the temper of the steel, that Sir Philip, after having examined it minutely, waived his objections. The price being fixed, the body armour to match was brought forward, piece by piece, and laid upon the bench. It was of complete plate, as was now the custom of the day, but yet many pieces of the old chain hauberk were retained to cover the joinings of the different parts. Thus beneath the gorget, or camail, which covered the throat, was a sort of tippet formed of interlaced rings of steel, to hang down over the cuirass and afford additional protection; while, at the same time, from the tassets which terminated the cuirass, hung a broad edge of the same, to complete their junction with the cuissards, or thigh pieces.

This arrangement pleased the old knight very much; for it was a remnant of the customs of ancient times, when he himself was young, and which totally disappeared before many years were over; but with the cuirass he quarrelled very much, exclaiming, "What, will men never have done with their idle fancies? 'Tis bad enough to divide the breast-plate into two, and hang the lower part to the upper by that red strap and buckle; but what is the use of sticking out the breast, like that of a fat-cropped pigeon?"

"It gives greater use to the arms, noble sir," replied Launcelot Plasse, "and turns a lance much easier, from being quite round. Besides, it is the fashion of the court of Burgundy: and no noble gentleman could appear there well without. The palettes, too, you see, are shaped like a fan, and gilt with quaint figures at the corners. It cost me nine days to make these palettes alone, and the genouillières, which have the same work upon them. Then the pauldrons —see how they are artfully turned over at the top of the shoulder with a gilt bordure."

"And pray, what may that be for?" demanded the old knight; "we had no such tricks in my days to make a man look like a cray-fish."

"That is to give the arm fuller sweep and sway, either with axe or sword," answered the armourer. "You can thus raise your hand quite up to your very crest, which you could never do before, since pauldrons were invented."

"We used to give good stout strokes in the year eighty," rejoined Sir Philip Beauchamp, "as you well know, Master Launcelot. But boys must have boys' things—so let it pass; but, what between one piece and another, it will take a man an hour to get into his harness, with all these buckles and

straps. But I will tell you what, Master Launcelot, I will have no tuilles over the cuissards; they were a barbarous and unnatural custom, and very inconvenient too. I was once nearly thrown to the ground in Gascony, by the point catching the saddle as I mounted."

"Oh! they are quite gone out of use," replied the armourer; "and we now either make the tassets long, or add a guipon of mail, coming down to the thighs."

The jambes or steel boots, the sollerets or coverings for the feet, the brassards, gauntlets, and vambraces were then discussed and purchased, not without some chaffering on the part of the old knight, who was a connoisseur in the price as well as in the fashion of armour; but Launcelot Plasse had so much to say in favour of his commodities, that he obtained very nearly the sum he demanded.

He then proceeded to prove to Sir Philip Beachamp, that the suit would not be complete without the testière, the chanfron, and the manefaire and poitral of the horse to correspond; and, though his customer was not inclined to spend any more money, yet a soft word or two from Mary Markham won the day for the armourer, and he was directed to bring forth the horse armour for inspection.

While he and his men were busy fulfilling this command, the old knight turned, hearing some one speaking eagerly, and apparently imploringly, to his attendants; and, seeing an old woman poorly dressed conversing with them, he inquired, "What does the woman want, Hugh?"

"Ah! noble sir," replied the old dame, "if you would but interfere, it might save sin and wrong. I have just seen a poor girl dragged away by two men up to a house in the lane, called Burwash-house, where they have taken her in against her will."

"Ha!" cried Sir Philip Beauchamp; "why, he is an old and reverend man, my good Lord of Burwash, and will not suffer such things in his mansion. I will send up one of the men to tell him."

"The noble lord is not there, fair sir," replied the woman; "but he has lent his house to some gay knight, whose men do what they please with the poor people. 'Tis but yesterday my own child was struck by one of them."

"If there be wrong done, you must go to the officers of the duchy, good woman," answered the knight, whose blood was cold with age, and who could be prudent till he was chafed. "I will send one of the yeomen with you, to get you a hearing.

These things should be amended; but when Kings' sons will beat the citizens, and brawl in Cheape, there is no great hope."

"Good faith, Sir Philip!" cried the armourer, who had just come forth, bearing the manefaire upon his arm, "if it be the Duke of Clarence you speak of, and his brother John, 'twas they got beaten, and did not beat. We Londoners are sturdy knaves, and take not drubbings patiently, whether from lord or prince."

"And you are right, too," replied the old knight; "men are not made to be the sport of other men. But what's to be done about this girl, Launcelot? You know the customs here better than I do. The good woman says they have carried a girl off against her will to Burwash-house here, hard by."

"Why, that's the back of it," cried Launcelot Plasse. "The old lord is not there, but in his stead one Sir Simeon of Roydon, who, if I mistake not, will never win much renown by stroke of lance. Wait a minute, my good woman, till I have sold my goods, and then I and my men will go up with you, and set the girl free, or it shall go hard, if you are certain she was taken against her will."

"She shrieked loud enough to make you all hear," replied the old woman.

"I thought there was a noise when we were hammering at the back piece," observed one of the men.

"I heard nothing," said Launcelot Plasse.

"Oh, go at once, go at once," cried Mary Markham; "you know not how she may be treated. We can wait till you return. Send the men with them, dear Sir Philip."

"I will go myself, Mary," replied the knight. "Come along, my men, leave one with the horses, and the rest follow."

"I am with you, Sir Philip," cried the armourer. "Bring your hammers, lads, we will make short work of oaken doors."

But ere Sir Philip Beauchamp had taken two steps up the lane, the casement of a large window in the house which had been pointed out, was thrown suddenly open, and a woman's head appeared. The sill of the window was some twelve or fourteen feet from the ground; but, to the surprise of all, without seeming to pause for a moment, the girl whom they beheld set her foot upon it, caught the iron bar which ran down the middle of the casement, seemed to twist something round it, and then suffered herself to drop, hanging by her hands, first from the bar, and then from a scarf.

She was still some five or six feet from the ground, however; and Mary Markham, who had been watching eagerly, clasped her hands, and turned away her head. Sir Philip Beauchamp, and the men who accompanied him, paused, and they could hear a voice from within exclaim, "Follow her like light, by the back door! She will to the King, and that were ruin. What fear you, fool? She has broken the dagger in the lock, do you not see?"

As he spoke, the girl, after a momentary hesitation, during which she hung suspended by the hands, wavering with the motion which she had given herself in dropping from above, let go her hold, and sank to the ground. Fortunately the lane was soft and sandy; and she fell light, coming down, indeed, upon one knee, but instantly starting up again unhurt.

She then gazed wildly round her for an instant, and put her hand to her head, as if asking herself whither she should fly; but the sight of the old knight and his companions, and the sound of an opening door on the other side, brought her indecision quickly to an end, and running rapidly forward, she cast herself at Sir Philip Beauchamp's feet, embracing his knee, and crying, "Save me!—save me, noble sir!"

At the moment she reached the good old man, two stout fellows, who had rushed from a door in the wall, and followed her at full speed, were within two paces of her; and one of them caught her by the arm, even at the knight's feet, as he was in the act of commanding him to keep aloof.

"Stand back, fellow!" thundered Sir Philip Beauchamp, with the blood coming up into his withered cheek; and the next moment, in the midst of an insolent reply, he struck the knave in the face with his clenched fist, knocking him backwards all bloody on the ground.

The other man, who had more than once accompanied Sir Simeon of Roydon to Dunbury, and recognised its lord, slunk back to the house, stopped some others who were following, and then hastened in, to tell his master in whom Ella Brune had found a protector.

The man who had been knocked down, rose, gazed fiercely at the knight, and then looked behind him for support; but seeing his companions retreating, he too retrod his steps, not without muttering some threats of vengeance; while the old armourer cried after him, "Never show your faces again in the lane, knaves, or we will hide you back like hounds, or pound you like strayed swine."

In the meanwhile, Sir Philip had raised up the poor girl;

and Mary Markham was soothing her tenderly, as Ella, finding herself safe, gave way to the tears which her strong resolution had repressed in the actual moment of difficulty and danger.

"Come, come, do not weep, poor thing," said the knight, laying his large, bony hand upon her shoulder. "We will take care of you. Who is it that has done this?"

"A bad man, called Simeon of Roydon," replied Ella Brune, wiping away the tears.

"We know him," said Mary Markham, in a kindly tone; "and do not love him, my poor girl."

"And I have cause to love him less, noble lady," replied Ella Brune, waving her head mournfully. "'Tis but two nights ago he killed the last friend I had; and now he would have wronged me shamefully."

"Killed him!" exclaimed Mary; "what! murdered him?"

"'Twas the same as murder, replied the girl; "he rode him down in a mad frolic—a poor blind man. He is not yet in his grave."

"Come, come—be comforted," said Sir Philip. "Let us hear how all this chanced."

"We will be your friends, poor girl," added Mary Markham; and then, turning to the old knight, she asked, in a low tone, "can we not take her home with us?"

Sir Philip gazed at the minstrel's girl from head to foot, and then shrugged his shoulders slightly, with a significant look, as he remarked her somewhat singular dress.

"Nay, nay," said Mary Markham, in the same low tone; "do not let that stop you, noble friend. There may be some good amongst even them."

"Well, be it as you will, Mary," answered the old knight; "she must be better than she looks, to do as she has done. Come, poor thing—you shall go home with us, and there tell us more. Wait till I have finished the purchase of this harness, and we will go along back to Westminster; though how to take you through the streets in that guise, I do not well know."

"Get a boat, sir, at a landing by the Temple," said Launcelot Plasse, "and send the horses by land."

"A good thought," replied the knight; and thus it was arranged, the whole party returning to the armourer's shop, and thence, after the bargain was made, and all directions were given, proceeding to the water-side, where a boat was soon procured, which bore them speedily to the landing-place at Westminster.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PILGRIM.

One morning, while the events which I have lately detailed were passing in the city of London, a man in a long brown gown, with a staff in his hand, a cross upon his shoulder, and a cockle-shell in his hat, walked slowly, and apparently wearily, into the little village of Abbot's Ann, and sat himself down on a stone bench before the reeve's door.

Recognising the pilgrim from some far distant land as she looked out of her casement window, the good dame, with the charitable spirit of the age, took him forth some broken victuals and a cup of ale, and inquired what news he brought from over sea. The wanderer, however, seemed more inclined to ask than answer questions, and was apparently full of wonder and amazement at the tragic story—which he had just heard, he said—of the death of the Lady Catherine Beauchamp. He prayed the good woman, for love and for charity's sake, to tell him all about it; and she, very willing to gratify him—for every country gossip gains dignity while telling a horrible tale—began at the beginning of the affair, as far as she knew it; and related how, just on the night after the last Glutton mass, as Childe Richard of Woodville, their lord's nephew, was riding down the road with a friend, he heard a shriek, and, on hurrying to the water, found the body of the poor young lady floating down the stream; how the two gentlemen bore her to the chanter's cottage; and how marks were found upon her person, which seemed to prove that she had come to her death by unfair means.

"And has the murderer been discovered, sister?" inquired the old pilgrim.

"Alas, no!" replied the reeve's wife; "there have been whispers about, but nothing certain."

"Ay, murder will out, sooner or later," answered the pilgrim. "And whom did the whispers point at?"

"Nay," replied Dame Julian, "I know not that I ought to say; but, to a reverend man like you, who have visited the shrine of St. James, there can be no harm in speaking of these things, especially as we all know that the whispers are false. Well, then—but you must tell nobody what I say—the lady's own lover—husband, indeed, I might call him, for they were betrothed by holy church—has been accused of

having done the deed; but every one who knows Sir Harry Dacre is right sure that he would have sooner cut off both his hands; and, besides, the miller of Clatford Mill told me —'twas but yesterday morning—that, half an hour before sunset, on that very day when all this happened, he saw Sir Harry at his own place, and opened the gate for him to go through. He remembered it, he said, because the knight had torn his hand with a nail in the gate, by trying to open it without dismounting; and as soon as he was through, he rode on towards Wey Hill, which is quite away from here."

"Might he not have come back again by some other road?" asked the pilgrim.

"No," answered Dame Julian, "not without going four miles round; and, besides, the miller told me that his man Job saw the knight, half an hour after, at the top of Wey Hill, halting his horse, and gazing at the sun setting. Now that's a good way off, and this deed was done just after close of day."

"Then that clears him," replied the pilgrim; "but is there no one else suspected?"

The good woman shook her head, and he added—"Was nobody seen about here who might have had cause to wish the lady ill?"

"None," said Dame Julian, with a low laugh, "but one who might perhaps wish her dead; for he got all her wealth, which was prodigious, they say."

"Ay, was he seen about, then?" demanded the pilgrim; "there might be suspicion there."

"Why," said the reeve's wife, "he was staying up at the Hall, and passed homeward about three. It might be a little later, but not much. What became of him afterwards I do not know; and yet, now I think of it, he must have remained in the place some time, for he was seen an hour after, or more, by a girl, who asked me who he was."

"'Tis a wonder she did not know him," said the pilgrim, "if she lives in this place."

"But that she does not," answered Dame Julian. "She dwells a good way off, and was here by chance."

"Ay, 'tis a sad tale, indeed," rejoined her companion; "but I must go, good dame. Gramercy for your bounty. But tell me,—I saw an abbey as I came along; have they any famous relics there?"

"Ay, that they have," rejoined the reeve's wife, with a look of pride. "Our abbey is as rich in relics as any other in England;" and she began an enumeration of all the valu-

able things that it contained; amongst which, the objects that she seemed to set the greatest store by, was a finger of St. Luke the Evangelist, the veil of the blessed Virgin, and one of the ribs of St. Ursula.

The pilgrim declared that he must positively go and visit them, as he never passed any holy relics without sanctifying himself by their touch.

He accordingly took his way towards the abbey direct, and visited and prayed at the several shrines which the church contained, having secured the company and guidance of one of the monks, who were always extremely civil and kind to pilgrims and palmers, when they did not come exactly in the guise of beggars. The present pilgrim was of a very different quality; and he completely won the good graces and admiration of the attendant monk, not so much, indeed, by the devotion with which he told his beads and repeated his prayers, as by his generosity in laying down a large piece of silver before the rib of St. Ursula, another at the shrine of St. Luke, and a small piece of gold opposite to the veil of the blessed Virgin.

Having thus prepared the way, the stranger proceeded to open a conversation with the monk, somewhat similar to that which he had held with Dame Julian, the reeve's wife; and now a torrent of information flowed in upon him; for his companion had been one of the brethren who accompanied the abbot to the cottage whither the body of Catherine Beauchamp had been carried. The tale, however, though told with much loquacity, furnished but few particulars beyond those which the pilgrim had already gained; for the monk appeared a meek, good man, who took everything as he found it, and deduced but little from anything that he heard. All that he knew, indeed, he was ready to tell; but he had neither readiness nor penetration sufficient to gather much information, or to sift the corn from the chaff.

The pilgrim seemed somewhat disappointed, for he was certainly anxious to hear more; and he was on the eve of leaving the church unsatisfied, when he beheld another monk pacing the opposite aisle, with a grave, and even dull air. He was an old man, with a short, thin, white beard, and heavy features, which, till one examined closely, gave an expression of stupidity to his whole countenance, only relieved by the small, elephant-like eye, which sparkled brightly under its shaggy eyebrow.

"What brother is that?" demanded the pilgrim, looking across the church.

"Oh, that is brother Martin," replied the monk; "a dull and silent man, from whom you will get nothing. He is skilled in drugs and medicines, it is true. His cell is like an alchymist's shop; but we all think he must have committed some great sin in days of old, for half his time is spent in prayers and penances, and the other half in distilling liquors, or roasting lumps of clay and other stuffs in crucibles and furnaces. 'Tis rather hard, the lord abbot favours him so much, and has granted him two cells, the best in the whole monastery, to follow these vain studies, which, in my mind, come near to magic and sorcery. I saw him once, with my own eyes, make a piece of paper, cut in the shape of a man, dance upright, as if it had life."

"I will speak to him," said the pilgrim, "and will soon let you know if there be anything forbidden in his studies; for I have been in lands full of witches and sorcerers, and have learnt to discover them in an instant."

"'Tis a marvel if he answers you at all," replied the monk; "for he's as silent as a frog; but, I pray you, let me hear what you think of him."

"Ay, that I will," rejoined the stranger; "but you must keep away while we talk together, lest the presence of another might close his lips. I will seek you out afterwards, brother; I think your name is Clement? so the porter told me."

"The same, the same," replied the monk. "I will go to the refectory." But, before he went, he paused for a minute or two, and watched the pilgrim crossing the nave, and addressing brother Martin. At first, he seemed to receive no answer but a monosyllable. The next instant, however, much to his surprise, Clement saw the silent brother turn round, gaze intently upon the pilgrim's face, and then enter into an eager conversation with him. What was the subject of which they spoke he could not divine, or, rather, what was the secret by which the pilgrim had contrived to break the charmed taciturnity of silent brother Martin; and his curiosity was so much excited, that he thought fit to cross over also, though with a slow and solemn step, in order to benefit by this rare accident. The small, clear, grey eye of brother Martin, however, caught Clement's movements in a moment, and laying his hand upon the sleeve of the pilgrim's gown, he led him, with a quick step, through a small side door that opened into the cloister, and thence to his own cell, leaving the inquisitive monk, who did not choose to discompose his dignity, or shake his fat sides by rapid motion, behind them in the church.

What turn their communications took, and whether the pilgrim discovered or not that brother Martin was addicted to the black art, Clement never learned—for the faithless visitor of the abbey totally forgot to fulfil his promise; and when, at the end of about two hours, he took his departure, it was by the back door leading from the cloister over the fields. The high road was at no great distance, and along it he trudged with a much more light and active step than that which had borne him into the village on his first appearance; so that, had good Dame Julian, the reeve's wife, seen him as he went back, she might have been inclined to think that brother Martin had employed upon him some magical device, to change age into youth.

About half a mile from Andover, the pilgrim turned a little from the road, and, sitting down in a neighbouring field, took out of his wallet a large kerchief, and an ordinary hood, —then stripped off his brown gown and hat, laying them deliberately in the kerchief, and next divested himself of a quantity of white hair, which left him with a shock head of a lightish brown hue, a short tabard of blue cloth, a stout pair of riding boots, and a dagger at his girdle.

"So ends my pilgrimage!" said Ned Dyram, as he packed up his disguise in the napkin; "and, by my faith, I have brought home my wallet well stored. Out upon it!—am I to labour thus always for others? No, by my faith! I will at least keep some of the crusts I have got for myself; and if others want them they must pay for them. Let me see;—we will divide them fairly. Dame Julian and brother Clement in one lot; brother Martin in the other. That will do; and if aught be said about it hereafter, I will speak the truth, and avow that, had I been paid, I would have spoken. Alchemy is a great thing;—without its aid I could never have transmuted brother Martin's leaden silence into such golden loquacity. Why, I have taught the old man more in an hour than he has learned in his life before; and he has given wheat for rye; so that we are even."

With these sage reflections, Ned Dyram put his packet under his arm and walked on to Andover—where, at a little hostelry by the side of the river, he paused and called for his horse, which was soon brought. A cup of ale sufficed him for refreshment, and after he had drained it to the dregs, he trotted off upon the road to London, still meditating over all that he had learned at Abbot's Ann and Dun bury Abbey, and somewhat hesitating as to the course which he had to pursue.

It would afford little either of instruction or amusement, were I to trace all the reflections of a cunning but wayward mind—for such was that of Edward Dyram. Naturally possessed of considerable abilities, quick in acquirements, retentive in memory, keen, observing, dexterous, he might have risen to wealth, and perhaps distinction; for his were not talents of that kind which led some of the best scholars of that day to beg from door to door, with a certificate of their profound science from the chancellors of their universities, but of a much more serviceable and worthy kind. A certain degree of waywardness of mind and inconstancy of disposition—often approaching that touch of insanity, which affected, or was affected by, those wise men the court fools of almost all epochs—and an unscrupulousness in matters of principle, which left his conduct often in very doubtful balance between honesty and knavery, had barred his advancement in all the many walks he had tried. He had strong, and even ungovernable animal impulses also, which had more than once led him into situations of difficulty, and between which and his natural ambition, there was the same struggle that frequently took place between his good sense and his folly. He laboured hard, not perhaps to govern his passions, but rather to keep their gratification within safe limits; and he felt a sort of ill-will towards himself when they overcame him, which generated a cynical bitterness towards others. That bitterness was also increased by a consciousness of not having succeeded in any course as much as the talents he knew himself to possess might have ensured; but it must not be supposed for one moment that Ned Dyram ever attributed the failure of his efforts for advancement to himself. The injustice or folly of others, he thought, or the concurrence of untoward circumstances, had alone kept him in an inferior situation. Though the King, on his accession to the throne, had extended to him greater favour than to any other of those who had participated in the wild exploits of his youth, simply because Ned Dyram had never prompted or led in any unjustifiable act, and had not withheld the bitterness of his tongue even from the youthful follies of the Prince, yet he felt a rankling disappointment at not having been promoted and honoured, without ever suspecting that Henry might have seen in him faults or failings that would have rendered him a more dangerous servant to a sovereign than to a private individual. Yet such was the case; for that great prince's eyes were clear-sighted and keen; and though he had not troubled

himself to study all the intricacies of the man's character, he had perceived many qualities which he believed might be amended by mingling with the world in an inferior station, but which unfitted the possessor at the time for close attendance upon a monarch.

Ned Dyram, however, though affecting that bluntness which is so often mistaken for sincerity, was not without sufficient pliancy to conceal his mortification, and to perform eagerly whatever task the King imposed upon him. I do not say, indeed, that he proposed to perform it well, unless it suited his own views and wishes. He did the monarch's bidding with alacrity, because on that he thought his future fortune might depend; but he did not make up his mind to ensure success by diligence, activity, and zeal—satisfying himself by saying, that "the result must ever depend upon circumstances;" and one of those circumstances was always, in this case, Ned Dyram's own good will.

He had some hesitation, however, and some fear; for there was but one man in England whose displeasure he dreaded, and that man was the King. But yet I would not imply that it was his power he feared alone: he feared offending the man rather than the monarch, for Henry had acquired over him that influence which can be obtained only by a great and superior mind over one less large and comprehensive. It was the majesty of that great prince's intellect of which he stood in awe, not the splendour of his throne; and perhaps he might have yielded to the impression in the present instance, and done all that he ought to have done, had he not perceived too clearly the feelings which prompted him to do so; for as soon as he was conscious that dread of the King was operating to drive him in a certain direction, the dogged perversity of his nature rose up and dragged him to the contrary side. He called himself "a cowed hound;" and, with all the obstinate vanity of a wrong-headed man, he resolved to prove to himself that he had no fear, by acting in direct opposition to the dread of which he was conscious.

As the best way of conquering all scruples, he treated them lightly from that moment; quickened his horse's pace, stopped to sup and sleep about fifteen miles from London, and presented himself at the gates of the palace at an early hour next morning. There he was kept waiting for some time, as the King was at council; but at length he was admitted to the monarch's presence, and, in answer to ques-

tions, which evidently showed that he had been sent into Hampshire to collect information of a more definite character than had previously reached Henry's ears, in regard to the death of Catherine Beauchamp, he gave his sovereign at full all the tidings he had gained from Dame Julian, the reeve's wife, from brother Clement, and from two or three other persons, whom he had seen before he met with those I have mentioned. Of brother Martin, however, he said not a word; and Henry mused for several minutes without observation.

"Well," he said at length, "refresh yourself and your horse, Ned; and then go back and join your new lord. Here is largess for your service, though I am sorry you have been able to gain no more clear intelligence;" and at the same moment he poured the contents of a small leathern purse, which had been lying on the table, into his hand.

The amount was far larger than Ned Dyram had expected; —for Henry was one of the most open-handed men on earth —and he paused, looked from the gold to the monarch, and seemed about to speak. At that moment, however, the door of the room opened, and a young gentleman entered in haste. By the stern and somewhat contracted, but high forehead—by the quick, keen eye, and by the compressed lips, Ned Dyram instantly recognised Prince John of Lancaster; and, at a sign from the King, he bowed low and quitted the presence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NEW FRIENDS.

Ella Brune sat on a stool at the feet of Mary Markham, on the day after Richard of Woodville's departure from London, and certainly a more beautiful contrast was seldom seen than between the fair lady and the minstrel girl, as the one told and the other listened to, the tale of the old man's death, and all that had since occurred. The eyes of both were full of tears, which did not run over, indeed, but hung trembling on the eyelid, like drops of summer dew in the cup of a flower; and Mary Markham, with the kind, familiar impulse of sympathy, stretched forth her fair hand twice, and pressed that of her less fortunate companion, as she told

the tale of her sorrows, and her sufferings. The poor girl's heart yearned towards her gentle friend, as she remarked her sympathy for all she felt,—her grief at the death of the poor old man, her pleasure at the conduct of Ella's generous protector, her indignation at the persecution she had suffered from a man whom she herself scorned and despised. But one thing is to be remarked. The name of Sir Simeon of Roydon, Ella spoke plainly, and repeated often, during her narrative; but that of Richard of Woodville, from some latent feeling in her own heart, she shrunk from pronouncing. It might be, that the meaning looks and smiles of the people of the inn where she had visited him, made her believe that others would entertain the suspicions or fancies which she imagined that those looks implied. It might be that she doubted her own heart, or that she knew there really were therein sensations which she dreaded to acknowledge to herself, and still more to expose to the eyes of others. Thus she gave him any other designation than his own name. She called him "the noble gentleman who had befriended her," "her protector," "her benefactor,"—everything, in short, but Richard of Woodville.

Mary Markham observed this reserve; and, as woman's heart, even in the most simple and single-minded, is always learned in woman's secrets, Mary judged, and judged rightly, that gratitude was growing up in Ella's bosom into love. She could very well understand that it should be so; she thought it natural—so natural, that it could scarce be otherwise; and what she felt within herself would have made her very lenient to passion in others, even had she been more harsh and severe than she was. She took a deep interest in the poor girl and her whole history, and not less in her grateful love than in any other part thereof; so that she was anxious to learn who and what this unnamed benefactor was, in order that she might judge whether there was the least hope or chance of Ella's tenderness meeting due return.

"He was a generous and noble-hearted knight, indeed," she said; "more like the ancient chivalry, my poor girl, than the heartless nobility of the present day."

"He is not a knight," answered Ella, timidly; "but I am sure he soon will be, for he well deserves his spurs."

"And he is young and handsome, of course, Ella?" said Mary Markham, with a smile.

The minstrel girl coloured, but answered nothing; and Mary went on, saying, "But you must tell me his name, Ella; I would fain know who is this noble gentleman."

Thus plainly asked, Ella Brune could not refuse to answer; and, bending down her bright eyes upon the ground, she said, "His name is Richard of Woodville, lady."

She spoke in a tone so low, that the words might have been inaudible to any other ear than that of Mary Markham. The well-known sound, however, was instantly caught by her, producing emotions in her heart such as she had never felt before. Her very breath seemed stopped; her bosom fluttered, as if there had been a caged bird within; her cheek turned very pale, and then flushed warm again with the blood spreading in a brighter glow over her fair forehead and her blue-veined temples. Hers was not indeed a jealous disposition; her nature was too generous and frank to be suspicious or distrustful; but it is difficult for any woman's ear to hear that he to whom her whole affections are given is loved by another, and her heart not beat with emotions far from pleasurable.

Yet Mary schooled herself for what she felt—for the slight touch of doubt towards Woodville, and of anger towards Ella, which crossed her bosom for a moment. "It is not his fault," she thought, "if the girl loves him; nor hers either to love him for acts of generous kindness. She is no more to blame for such feelings than myself; the same high qualities that won my regard might well gain hers. He is too noble, too—too true and faithful to trifle with her, or to forget me. Yet, would this had not happened! It is strange, too, that he did not mention all this to me!"

But then she remembered how every hour he had spent with her had passed, how little time they had found to say all that two warm and tender hearts could prompt; how often they had been interrupted in the half-finished tale of love; how constantly it had been renewed whenever they were alone; and then she thought it not extraordinary at all that he had spoken of nothing else.

Such thoughts, however, kept her mute, with her eyes gazing on the tapestry at the other side of the room; and she saw not that Ella, surprised at her silence, had now raised her look, and was reading in the countenance—with the skill which peril and misfortune soon acquire in this hard world—all that was passing in the heart beneath. The poor girl's face was very pale, for she had her emotions too; but yet she was calmer than Mary Markham, for one of the chief sources of agitation was wanting in her bosom. She was without hope. She might love, but it was love with no expectation. The future, which to Mary's eyes was like the garden

of the Hesperides, all hanging with golden fruit, was a desert to poor Ella Brune. She had no fear, because she had no hope. She had no doubts, because she had no trust. She was externally calm, for though there were painful sensations, there was no internal contention. She, therefore, it was who spoke first.

"You know him, lady," she said, in a sweet, gentle, humble tone; "and if you know him, you love him."

"I do know him," answered Mary Markham, with a trembling voice and glowing cheek—"I have known him well for years."

She paused there; but the moment after, she thought, with that generous confidence so often misplaced, but which was not so in this instance, "It were better to tell her all, for her sake and for mine. If she be good and virtuous, as I think, it cannot but lead to good to let her know the whole truth."

"Ay, Ella," she continued aloud, "and you are right. I do love him, and he loves me. We have plighted our faith to each other, and wait but the consent of others to be more happy than we are."

A tear trembled in the eye of Ella Brune; but what were the thoughts that flashed like lightning through her mind? "The lady loves him, and she sees I love him too. Jealousy is a strange thing, and a sad pang!—She may doubt him, even with such a friendless being as I am—I will sweep that doubt away;" and with a resigned, but gentle smile, looking in Mary's face, she said—"I was sure of it."

"Of what, Ella?" asked Mary Markham, with some surprise.

"That he loved some one, and was beloved again," replied the poor girl; and she repeated "I was sure of it."

"What could make you sure?" asked the lady, gazing at her with a less embarrassed look. "He did not tell you, did he?"

"Oh, no," answered Ella Brune. "All he told me was, that he was going afar to Burgundy, and that as he could not give me any further protection himself, he would send one of his men to inquire after me, that he might hear I was safe, and as happy as fate would let me be, but—" and she paused, as if she doubted whether to proceed or not.

"But what, Ella?" demanded Mary.

"Why, I was foolish, lady," said the girl; "and perhaps you may think me wrong too, and bold. But when I heard that he was going to Burgundy, I cried, 'Oh, that I were

going with you!' And I told him that I had kinsfolk both in Liege and in Peronne; and then I knew by his look, and what he said, that there was some lady whom he loved, and who loved him."

"How did that enlighten you?" inquired Mary Markham. "Did he refuse you?—That were not courteous, I think."

"No, he did not actually refuse," answered Ella Brune, "but he said, that it might hardly be; and I saw, he thought that his lady might be jealous—might suspect—"

Mary Markham put her hand on Ella's, with a warm smile, and said, "I will neither suspect him, nor be jealous of you, Ella—though perhaps I might have been," she added; "yes, perhaps I might, if I had heard you were with him, and I had not known why. Yet I should have been very wrong. Out upon such doubts I say, if they can prevent a true-hearted gentleman from doing an act of kindness to a poor girl in her need, lest a jealous heart should suspect him. But I will write to him, Ella: and yet it is now in vain; for he has left Westminster."

Ella gazed at her, smiling. "We know not our own hearts," she said; "and, perhaps, dear lady, you might be jealous yet."

"No, no!" cried Mary, with one of her own joyous laughs again. "Never, now. I am of a confiding nature, my poor girl; and I soon conquer those bitter enemies of peace, called doubts."

Ella Brune gazed round the room. "If I had some instrument, I could sing to you on that theme," she said.

"Nay, you can sing without, Ella," replied the lady. "I have none here, alas!"

"Well, I will sing it, then," answered Ella Brune; "'tis an old ditty, and a simple one;" and, leaning her hand on Mary Markham's knee, she sang:—

SONG.

"Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!
'Tis a shield of seven-fold steel.
Cares and sorrows come they must;
But sharper far is doubt to feel.
Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!

"If deceit must vex the heart—
Who can pass through life without?—
Better far to bear the smart
Than to grind the soul with doubt.
Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!

"Trust the lover, trust the friend;
Heed not what old rhymers tell.
Trust to God: and in the end
Doubt not all will still be well.
Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!

"Love's best guide, and friendship's stay—
Trust, to innocence was given;
'Tis doubt that paves the downward way,
But trust unlocks the gates of heaven.
Trust! trust! sweet lady, trust!"

"And so I will, Ella," cried the lady; "so have I ever done, and will do still; but methinks you have made the song to suit my ear."

"Nay, in truth, dear lady, it is an ancient one," replied Ella Brune; but ere she could add more, old Sir Philip Beauchamp strode into the room, with an air hurried, yet not dissatisfied.

"I have seen the King, Mary," he said; "and, on my life, he is a noble youth—right kingly in his port and in his words. His brother John, who won his spurs under my pennon when but a boy, soon got me speech of him; and you are to go with me at once to his presence, pretty maid. Nay, do not look downcast; he is no frightful tyrant, but a man that lady's eyes may look upon well pleased; and 'tis needful for your safety you should go."

"Must she go alone, dear knight?" asked Mary Markham, with kind consideration for the girl's fears.

"Alone! no. I am to go with her, to be sure," answered Sir Philip. "How, my fair Mary, you would fain go visit Henry, too! What would Richard of Woodville say?"

"He would trust," answered Mary Markham, giving a gay look to Ella. "However, I seek not to go, noble sir; but it would be better for this poor girl to have my maid, Maude, with her—for decency's sake," she continued, in a laughing tone; "you old knights are sometimes too light and gallant; and I must protect her from your courteous speeches by the way. Come with me, Ella. I have a cloak in my chamber that will suit well with your hood, and cover you all, so that nothing will be seen but the edge of your wimple. Then will you and Sir Philip escape scandal, if you both walk softly, and look demure, while Maude trips along beside you."

Though Mary Markham said no word of the minstrel girl's attire, and did not even glance her eye to the gold fringe upon her gown, yet Ella understood, and was thankful for, her kind care, and mentally promised herself, that, before that day was out, she would provide herself with plainer

weeds. In less than five minutes she and the maid were ready to depart; and, accompanied by Sir Philip, they soon crossed the open ground before the Abbey and the Sanctuary, and entered the gates of the palace yard. At the private door of the royal residence they received immediate admission; for a page was waiting Sir Philip's return; but he led them, not to the small chamber where Henry had received Ned Dyram in the morning, and Sir Philip shortly after. Following, on the contrary, the larger staircase, the boy conducted the little party to a hall, then used as an audience chamber; and when they entered they at once perceived the King at the farther end, surrounded by a gay and glittering throng, and listening, apparently with deep attention, to an old man, dressed as a prelate of the Church, who, with slow and measured accents, was delivering what seemed a somewhat long oration. Whatever was the subject on which he spoke, it seemed to be one of much interest; for, ever and anon, the King bowed his head with a grave, approving motion, and a murmur of satisfaction rose from those around.

Slowly and quietly the old knight and his companions drew near, and then found that the good Bishop was arguing the King's title, not alone to the Duchies of Normandy, Aquitaine, and Anjou, which undoubtedly belonged of right to the English Crown, but also to the whole of France, which as certainly belonged to another. Sir Philip Beauchamp marked well the monarch's countenance as he listened, and perceived that, when the subject was the recovery of those territories which had descended to the race of Plantagenet from William the Conqueror, Fulke of Anjou, and Eleanor of Aquitaine, one of those grave inclinations of the head which marked his approbation followed; but that, when the claim of all France was considered, Henry paused, and seemed to meditate more on thoughts suggested by his own mind than on the mere words that struck his ear. The surrounding nobles, however, applauded all; and bright and beaming eyes were turned upon the prelate when he concluded his oration with the words—strange ones, indeed, in the mouth of a Christian bishop: "Wherefore, Oh my Lord, the King! advance your banner, fight for your right, conquer your inheritance; spare not sword, blood, or fire; for your war is just, your cause is good, your claim is true!"*

"Many thanks, my good lord," replied the King; "we will with our council consider duly what you have advanced;

* The recorded words of Henry Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury.

and we beseech you to pray God on our behalf, that we be advised wisely. Pity it were, indeed, to shed Christian blood without due cause; and, therefore, we shall first fairly and courteously require of our cousin the restitution of those territories undeniably appertaining to our crown; with the which we may content ourselves, if granted frankly; but if they be refused, a greater claim may perchance grow out of the denial of the smaller one; and, at all events, we shall know how, with the sword, to do ourselves right when driven to draw it. We will then beseech farther communion with you on these weighty matters, and, for the present, thank you much."

The Bishop retired from the spot immediately facing the King; and Henry's eye lighting on Sir Philip Beauchamp, he bowed his head to him, saying, "Advance, my noble friend. Ha! you have brought the girl with you, as I said;" and his look fixed upon the countenance of poor Ella Brune, with a calm and scrutinizing gaze, not altogether free from wonder and admiration, to see such delicate beauty in one of her degree, but without a touch of that coarse and gloating expression which had offended her in the stare of Sir Simeon Roydon.

"Is the knight I sent for, here?" demanded the King, turning towards the page.

"Not yet, Sire," answered the boy.

"Well, then," said Henry, "though it is but fair that a man accused should hear the charge against him, we must proceed; and you lords will witness what this young woman says, that it may be repeated to him hereafter. Now, maiden, what is this which the worthy knight, Sir Philip Beauchamp, has reported concerning you and Sir Simeon of Roydon?"

To say that Ella Brune was not somewhat abashed would be false; for she did feel that she was in the presence of the most powerful King, and the most chivalrous court in Europe; she did feel that all eyes were turned upon her, every ear bent to catch her words. But there were truth and innocence at her heart, the strongest of all supports. There was the sense of having been wronged also; and, perhaps, some feeling of scorn rather than shame was roused by the light smiles and busy whisper that ran round the lordly circle before which she stood; for there is nothing so contemptible in the eyes, even of the humble, if they be wise and firm of heart, as the light and causeless, but oppressive sneer of pride—whether that pride be based in station, fortune, courtliness, or aught else on earth; for the true nobility of mind, which

sometimes impresses even pride with a faint mark of its own dignity, never treads upon the humble.

Henry, however, heard the buzz, and felt offended at the light looks he saw. "My lords!" he said, in a tone of surprise and displeasure; "I beseech you, my good uncle of Exeter, warn those gentlemen of that which the King would not speak harshly. This is no jesting matter. Wrong has been done—I may say almost in our presence, so near has it been to our palace gates; and, by the Queen of Heaven, such things shall not escape punishment, while I wear the crown or bear the sword. When I am powerless to defend the meanest of my subjects, may death give my sceptre to more mighty hands; when I am unwilling to do justice to any in the land, may my enemies take from me the power I have borne unworthily. Go on with your tale, maiden."

Ella Brune obeyed the King's order, with a voice that faltered at first, but the rich sweet tone of which soon called the attention of all to what she said; and, taking up her story from the beginning, she related the death of her old companion, the interview which she had first had with Sir Simeon of Roydon, and the violent manner in which she had been carried off, as she was returning to the hostelry where she lodged. As she spoke she gained confidence; and though, ere she had proceeded far, the base knight himself entered the presence, and placed himself exactly opposite to her, glaring at her with fierce and menacing eyes, her tongue faltered no more; and she went on to speak of her second interview with him, telling how she had forced back the lock of the door with her dagger—how the servants of the knight had not ventured to seize her, under the belief that the weapon was poisoned—and how she had dropped from the great window at the end of the corridor into the lane below.

As soon as she had done, Roydon stepped forward, as if to reply; but old Sir Philip Beauchamp, who stood by Ella's side to give her support, waved his hand, saying, "Silence, boy! till all be said against you—then speak if you list. As far as the carrying off of this poor little maid is concerned, a good woman of the neighbourhood saw the deed done, and can bear witness respecting it, if farther testimony is required. I saw the manner of her escape as she has told it, and knocked down one of this knight's knaves just as he clutched her. So far her story is confirmed. What passed between him and her in private, they only know; but I would take her word against his in any town; for I know him to be a wondrous liar."

A laugh ran round the royal circle; and Sir Simeon of Roydon put his hand to his dagger; but the King turned towards him, saying, "Now, sir, have you aught to answer?—Is this story true or false?"

"Somewhat mixed, Sire," answered Simeon of Roydon, with a sneer upon his lip. "The young woman is rather fanciful. I will own, that because she has a pretty face, as you may see, and bright eyes, and a small foot, and rounded ankle, she pleased my fancy; and, although of somewhat low degree for such an honour, I thought to make her my paramour for a time, as many another man might do. Minstrel girls and tomblesteres are not generally famed for chastity; and, by my faith! I thought I showed her favour when I told my servants to find her out and bring her to my lodging. If they used any violence, 'twas not my fault, for I bade them treat her gently; and, as to her confinement at my house, that is pure fancy—she might have gone whenever she chose."

"'Tis strange, then," said the King, with a scornful smile, "that she should take such means of going. People do not usually leap out of a window, when they can walk through a door."

"What made you bellow after her, like a wild bull?" demanded Sir Philip Beauchamp, turning to the culprit: "I heard you with my ears, and so did many more, shout to your knaves to follow her, lest she should to the King. I know your voice right well, sir knight, and will vouch for its sweet sounds."

"Doting fool!" murmured Simeon of Roydon.

"Doting!" cried the old knight; "take care you don't feel my gauntlet in your face, lest I send you home as toothless as I sent your serviceable man. You will find that there is strength enough left to crush such a worm as you."

"Silence, Sir Philip!" said the King. "Sir Simeon of Roydon, according to your own account, you have committed an offence for which, if it had been done within the gates of our good city of London, the sober citizens would, methinks, have set you on a horse's back, with your face to the tail, and marched you in no pleasant procession. But, I must add, I do not believe your account; it seems to me to bear no character of truth about it. Yet, that you may not stand upon my judgment alone, if there be one of these good lords here present, who will say they do, upon their honour, believe that this poor maiden speaks falsely, and you tell the simple truth, you shall go free. What say you, lords—is the girl true, or he?"

"The girl!—the girl!" cried all the voices round.

"However men may love leaping," said John of Lancaster, "they seek not to break their necks by springing from a window, when they can help it."

"Well, then," continued Henry, "you must carry your amorous violence to other lands, Sir Simeon of Roydon. You have committed a discourteous and unknightly act, and must give us time to forget it. We will not touch you in person or in purse, in goods or lands; but we banish you for two years from the realm of England. Bestow yourself where you will, but be not found within these shores after one month from this day, which space we give you to prepare. Is this a just award, my lords?"

The gentlemen round bowed their heads; and Henry, turning to the good old knight, added, with a gracious smile, "I thank you much, Sir Philip Beauchamp, for bringing this matter to my knowledge. These are deeds that I am resolved to check, with all the power that God entrusts to me."

"Heaven bless your Grace, and ever send us such a King!" replied the old knight; and, taking Ella by the hand, with a lowly reverence to the monarch, he led her from the hall.

Henry, it would seem, dismissed his court at once; for before the minstrel girl and her companion had reached the bottom of the stairs, they were surrounded by several of the younger nobles, who were all somewhat eager to say soft and flattering things to the fair object of the day's interest, notwithstanding some rough reproof from good Sir Philip Beauchamp. But as he and his young charge were passing out with Mary Markham's maiden, a low deep voice whispered in Ella's ear, "I swear, by Christ's sepulchre, I will have revenge!"—and the next moment Sir Simeon of Roydon passed them, mounted his horse in the palace-yard, and rode furiously away.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PREPARATION.

It was late in the evening of the same day of which we have just been speaking, when Ella Brune returned to her hostelry. She had gone back to thank fair Mary Markham for her kindness, intending only to stay for a few moments;

but her new friend detained her till the sun was near his setting, and then only let her depart under the escort of Hugh of Clatford and another yeoman, after extracting a promise from her that she would return on the following morning, after the sad ceremony of her grandsire's funeral was over. And now Ella sat in her lonely little chamber, with the tears filling her bright eyes, which seemed fixed upon a spot of sunshine on the opposite wall of the court, but, in reality, saw nothing, or, at least, conveyed no impression to the mind. Why was it Ella wept? To say truth, Ella herself could not, or would not tell. It was, perhaps, the crowding upon her of many sad sensations, the torrent swelled by many smaller rills, which caused those tears; and yet there was one predominant feeling—one that she wished not to acknowledge even to her own heart. What can I call it? How shall I explain it? It was not disappointment; for, as I have said before, she did not, she had never hoped. No, the best term for it is, love without hope; and oh! what a bitter thing that is!

During the whole of that morning she had had no time to dwell upon it; she had been occupied while she remained with Mary Markham in struggling against her own sensations—not examining them. But now she paused and pondered: in solitude and in silence, she gave way to bitter thought; but it was not with the weak and wavering irresolution of a feeble mind. On the contrary, though the anguish would have its tear, she regarded her present fate and future conduct with the firm and energetic purposes of a heart inured to suffer and to decide. Her mind rested upon Richard of Woodville, upon his kindness, his generosity, his chivalrous protection of her who had never met with such protection before; and the first strong determination of her mind expressed itself, in the words she murmured to herself, "I will repay it!"

Then, again, she asked herself, "Why should I feel shame, or fear, or hesitation now, at the thought of following him through the world—of watching for the hour, for the moment, when God may grant me the grace to serve him? He loves another, and is loved by another! He can never be anything to me, but the friend who stood forward to help me in the hour of need. What has sex, or station, to do with it? Why should I care more than if I were a man? and how often do the meanest, by watchful love, find an opportunity to deliver or to support the highest and the mightiest! Why should I think of what men may say or believe? True in

my own heart, and conscious of my truth, I may well laugh at suspicion, which follows such as I am, whatever course they take. How often have I been thought a ribald and a losel, when I have guarded my words, and looks, and actions, most carefully! and now I will dare to do boldly what my heart tells me, knowing that it is right. Yet, poor thing," she added, after a moment, "thou art beggar enough, I fear! thou must husband thy little store well. Let me see; I will count my treasure. There are the fifty half nobles sent me by the King, and those my dear protector gave me. Now for the little store of the poor old man;" and, drawing a key from her bosom, she crossed the room to where, upon a window-seat, there stood a small oaken coffer, containing her apparel and that of the poor old minstrel. After opening the box, and taking out one or two instruments of music which lay at the top, she thrust her hand further down, and brought forth a small leathern pouch, fastened by a thong bound round it several times. It cost her some trouble to unloose it; but at length she spread out the mouth, and poured the contents upon the top of the clothes in the coffer. She had expected to see nothing but silver and copper; but amongst the rest were several pieces of gold; and besides these, was a piece of parchment, tied up, with some writing upon it, and a gold ring, set with a large precious stone. The former she examined closely, and read the words with some difficulty; for they were written by no very practised hand, in rough and scattered characters. She made it out at length, however, to be merely "My Ella's dowry;" and a tear fell upon it as she read. She thought that the handwriting was her father's.

She then looked at the ring, and saw by its lustre that it must be of some value; but a strip of leather which was sewn round the gold caught her eye, and she found it, too, traced with some rude characters. They only expressed a date, however, which was 21 July, 1403, and what it meant she knew not. Opening the parchment packet, she then proceeded to examine of what her little dowry consisted; and, to her surprise and joy, she found forty broad pieces of gold. "Nay," she exclaimed, "this is, indeed, wealth; why, I am endowed like a knight's daughter." And well might she say so; for when we remember the difference between the value of gold in that day and at present, the amount she now possessed,—what with the sum she had just found, and the penalty imposed by the King on Simeon of Roydon,—was equal to some six or seven hundred pounds.

"I shall have enough to follow him for ten years," said Ella Brune, gazing on the gold, "without being a charge to any one; and then there may still remain sufficient to gain me admission to a nunnery. But I will lay it by carefully:" and placing all the gold she had, except the few pieces that had been loose in the pouch, into the parchment which had contained her dowry, she tied it up again carefully, and restored it to its place.

"Yet I will be avaricious," she said. "I will disencumber myself of everything I do not want, and change it into coin. —Shall I sell this ring? No; it may mean something I do not know. 'Tis easily carried, and might create suspicion if I disposed of it here. Perhaps my cousin at Peronne can tell me more about it. How shall I sell the other things? Nay, I will ask the hostess to do it for me. She will think of her own payment, and will do it well!"

After carefully putting back the ring and the money, she opened the door of the room, and called down the stairs, "Hostess, hostess! Mistress Trenchard!"

"Coming, coming, little maid," said the good dame, from below. "Do not be in haste; I am with you in a minute;" and, after keeping Ella waiting for a short time, more to make herself of importance than because she had anything else to do, she came panting up the stairs, closed the door, and seated herself on the side of the low bed.

"Well, my poor Ella," she said, "what want you with me? Yours is a sad case, indeed, poor thing. My husband and I both said, when you and poor old Murdock Brune went away to foreign lands, leaving your own good country behind you, that harm would come of it."

"And yet he died in England," replied Ella, with a sigh; "but what you say is very true, hostess; no good has come of it; and we returned poorer than we went—I have wherewithal to pay my score," she added, seeing a slight cloud come over good Mistress Trenchard's face; "but yet I shall want more for my necessity; and I would fain ask you a great favour."

"What is that?" asked the hostess, somewhat drily.

"It is simply, that you would sell for me a good many of these things that I do not want," answered Ella. "Here are several instruments of music, which I know cost much, and must produce something."

"Oh, that I will, right willingly!" replied the hostess; "and 'tis but right and fitting that you should trust such matters to one who is accustomed to buy and sell, than to do it

yourself, who know nothing of trade, God wot. I will have them to Westcheape, where there are plenty of fripperies; or carry them to the Lombards, who, perhaps, know more about such matters."

"I should think that the Lombards would purchase them best," answered Ella; "for one of these instruments, the viol, was purchased out of Italy, when my grandfather was chief minstrel to the great Earl of Northumberland."

"Ay, I remember the time well," said Mistress Trenchard. "Murdock Brune was a great man in those days, and rode upon a grey horse, fit for a knight. He used to pinch my cheek, and call me pretty Dolly Trenchard, till my husband was somewhat crusty;—and so the viol is valuable, you think?"

"Yes, and the ribible, too," answered Ella Brune; "for they were cut by a great maker in Italy, and such are not to be found in England."

"I will take care, I will take care," rejoined the hostess. "Gather them all together, and I will send up Tom, the drawer, for them, presently. To-morrow I will take them to the Lombards; for it is somewhat late this evening."

"Nay, but I have other favours to ask of you, dame," said Ella Brune. "To-morrow they bury the poor old man, and I must have a black gown of serge, and a white wimple; and I would fain that you went with me to the burial, if you could steal away for an hour; for it will be a sad day for me."

"That will I do, poor maiden," replied the hostess, readily; not alone because she took a sincere interest in her fair guest, but because in those days, as in almost all others, people of inferior minds found a strange pleasure in bearing part in any impressive ceremony, however melancholy. As so much of her spare time was likely to be occupied on the morrow, she agreed to run up to Cheape that very night, before the watch was set, and to purchase for Ella Brune the mourning garments which she required. The latter commission she performed fully to the poor girl's satisfaction, returning with a loose gown of fine black serge, ready made, and a wimple and hood of clear lawn, little differing from that of a nun.

Ella gazed on the dress with some emotion, murmuring to herself,—"Ay, the cloister; it must end there, at last!—Well, prayer and peace!—'tis the calmest fate, after all."

But the sale of the instruments of music, and several other small articles, was not executed quite as well. Men were rogues in those times, as at present, though, perhaps, in the improvement of all things, roguery has not been neglected,

and the good Lombards took care not to give more than half the value of the goods they purchased. Neither Ella nor good Mistress Trenchard herself knew any better, however; so that the latter thought she had made a very good bargain, and the former was content. Her store was by this means considerably increased; and, a short time before the appointed hour, Ella, with the hostess, set out towards the hospital of St. James, for the sad task that was to be performed that day.

I will not pause upon the hours that followed. Dark and sorrowful such hours must ever be; for the dim eyes of mortality see the lamp of faith but faintly, and there is nought else to light our gaze through the obscure vault of death to the bright world of re-union. Put the holy promises to our heart as eagerly, as fondly as we will, how difficult is it to obtain a warm and living image of life beyond this life! How the clay clings to the clay! How the spirit cleaveth to the dust with which it hath borne companionship so long! Strange, too, to say, that we can better realize in our own case the idea of renewed existence, than in the case of those we love. It is comparatively easy to fancy that we who have lived to-day, shall live to-morrow;—that we, who lie down to rest ourselves in sleep and to rise refreshed, shall sleep in death, and wake again renewed. There is in every man's own heart a sentiment of his immortality, which nothing can blot out, but the vain pride of human intellect—the bitterest ashes of the forbidden fruit. But when we see the dearly loved, the bright, the beautiful, the wise, the good, fall, like a withered leaf, into the dark corruption of the tomb—the light go out like an extinguished lamp—and all that is left, all that has been familiar to our living senses, drop into dust and mingle with its earth again, the Saduceean demon seizes on us; and it requires a mighty struggle of the spirit, prayer, patience, resignation, hope, and faith, to win our belief from the dark actuality before us, and fix it on the distant splendour of a promised world to come.

They were sad hours for poor Ella Brune; and when they were over, the chambers of the heart felt too dark and lonely for her to admit any thoughts but those of the dead. She sent, therefore, to Mary Markham, to tell her that she was too wobegone to come that day; and, returning to her little chamber at the inn, she sat down to weep, and pass the evening with her memories.

On the following morning early, she once more set out for Westminster, and passed quietly along the road till she reached Charing; but near the hermitage and chapel of St. Catherine, just opposite the cross, she perceived a man stand-

ing gazing up the Strand, with the serpent embroidered on the black ground, which distinguished the followers of Sir Simeon of Roydon. Her fears might have betrayed her; for she forgot for a moment the complete change of her dress, and fancied that she must be instantly recognised; but the instant after, recovering her presence of mind, she drew the hood far over her face, and passed the man boldly, without his even turning to look at her. She then made her way on towards Tote-hill, and soon came to the gates of the house in which Sir Philip Beauchamp had taken up his temporary abode.

Few but the higher nobility, or persons immediatly attached to the Court, indulged in those days in the luxury of a dwelling in London or the neighbouring city; and when business or pleasure called inferior personages to the capital, they either took up their dwelling at a hostel, or found lodging in the mansions of some of the great families to whom they were attached by friendship or relationship. Nor was such hospitality ever refused, so long as the house could contain more guests; for each man's consequence, and sometimes his safety, depended upon the number of those whom he entertained; and even when the lord was absent from his own dwelling, the doors were always open to those who were known to be connected with him. Thus Sir Philip Beauchamp had found ready lodging in the house of one of the numerous family of that name, the head of which was then the Earl of Warwick, though, ere many years had passed, an only daughter bore that glorious title into the house of Neville.

When Ella reached the mansion, the porter, distinguished by the cognizance of the bear, was standing before the gates, talking with a young man, who seemed to have just dismounted from a tired horse, and held the bridle-rein cast over his arm.

In answer to Ella's inquiry for the Lady Mary Markham, the old servant laughed, saying, "Here is another!—if it goes on thus all day, there will be nothing else but the opening of gates for a pretty lady who is not here. She departed last night with Sir Philip, fair maid. They went in great haste, good sooth I know not why; for 'twas but two hours before, the sturdy old knight told me he should stay three days; but they had letters by a messenger from the country, so perchance his daughter is ill."

"The blessed Virgin give her deliverance!" said Ella, turning away with a disappointed look; and, bending her steps back towards the city of London, she walked slowly on

along the dusty road, absorbed in no very cheerful thoughts, and marking little of what passed around her. But few people were yet abroad between the two towns—the Strand was almost solitary; and she had nearly reached the wall of the garden of Durham House, which ran along to the Temple, when she heard a voice behind her exclaim, in a sharp tone, "Why do you follow her, master knave?"

"What is that to you, blue tabard!" replied another tongue.

"I will let you know right soon, if you do not desist," answered the first.

"Whom do you serve?" asked the second.

"The King!" was the reply; "so away with you."

Ella looked round, and beheld the man whom she had found speaking with the porter a moment before, bending his brows sternly upon the servant of Sir Simeon Roydon, whom she had seen watching near the hermitage of St. Catherine, as she passed up the Strand. The latter, however, seemed to be animated by no very pugnacious spirit, for he merely replied, "Methinks one man has a right to walk the high road to London as well as another."

But he did not proceed to enforce this right by following the course he had been pursuing; and, crossing over from the south to the north side of the way, he was soon lost amongst the low shops and small houses which there occupied the middle of the road.

"I will ride along beside you, fair maiden," said Ned Dyram, for he it was who had come up, "though I should not wonder, from what the porter told me just now, if you were the person I am looking for."

He spoke civilly and gravely; and Ella replied, with a bright smile, "Ha! perhaps it is so; for he said he would send. Whom do you come from?"

"I come from Richard of Woodville," answered the man; "and I am sent to a maiden named Ella Brune, living not far up the new street somewhat beyond the Old Temple, in an hostelry called the Falcon."

"'Tis I—'tis I!" cried Ella. "Oh! I am glad to see you."

Her bright eyes lighted up, and her fair face glowed with an expression of joy and satisfaction, which added in no small degree to its loveliness; for, though we hear much of beauty in distress being heightened by tears, yet there is an inherent harmony between man's heart and joy, which makes the expression thereof always more pleasant to the eye than that of any other emotion.

Ned Dyram gazed at her with admiration, but withdrew his eyes the moment after, and resumed a more sober look. "I will give you all his messages by and by," he said, "for I shall lodge at the Falcon to-night, and have much to say. But yet I may as well tell you a part as we go along," he continued, dismounting from his horse, and taking the bridle on his arm. "First, fair maiden, I was to ask how you fared, and what you intended to do?"

"I have fared ill and well," answered Ella Brune; "but that is a long story, and I will relate it to you afterwards; for that I can talk of, though the people of the house should be present; but what I am to do is a deeper question, and I know not well how to answer it. I have friends at the court of Burgundy—"

"What, then, are you of noble race, lady?" asked Ned Dyram, in an altered tone.

"Oh, no!" replied Ella Brune, with a faint smile. "The cousin of whom I speak is but a goldsmith to the Count of Charolois; but, 'tis a long journey for a woman to take alone, through foreign lands, and amongst a people somewhat unruly."

"Why not come with us?" inquired Ned Dyram; "we sail from Dover in three days, and our company will be your protection. Did not Childe Richard tell you he was going?"

"Yes," answered Ella Brune, casting down her eyes, "but he did not seem to like the thought of having a woman in his company."

"Faith! that is courteous of the good youth," cried Ned Dyram, with a low sharp laugh. "He may win his spurs, but will not merit them, if he refuses protection to a lady."

"That, I am sure, he would not do," replied Ella, gravely. "He has given me the noblest protection at my need; but he may not think it right."

"No, no; you have mistaken him," said Ned Dyram. "He is courteous and kind, without a doubt. He might think it better for yourself to go to York, as he bade me tell you, and to see your friends there, and to claim your rights; but if you judge fit to turn your steps to Burgundy instead, depend upon it he will freely give you aid and comfort on the way. If he did doubt," added the man, "'twas but that he thought his lady-love might be jealous, if she heard that he had so fair a maiden in his company—for you know he is a lover!"—and he fixed his eyes inquiringly on Ella's face.

"I know he is," she answered, calmly, and without a

change of feature. "I know the lady, too; but she is not unwilling that I should go; and I dread much to show myself in York."

"Why so?" demanded Ned Dyram. But Ella Brune was not sufficiently won by his countenance or manner to grant him the same confidence that she had reposed in Richard of Woodville; and she replied, "For many reasons; but the first and strongest is, that there are persons there who have seized on that which should be mine. They are powerful; I am weak; and 'tis likely, as in such case often happens, that they would be willing to add wrong to wrong."

"Not only often, but always," replied Ned Dyram; "therefore I say, fair maiden, you had better come with us. Here's one arm will strike a stroke for you, should need be; and there are plenty more amongst us who will do the like."

Ella answered him with a bright smile; but at that moment they were turning up the lane opposite the gate of the Temple, and she paused in her reply, willing to think farther and see more of her companion before she decided.

"Stay, fair maiden!" continued Ned Dyram, who well knew where the hostelry of the Falcon was situate—"It may be as well to keep our counsel, whatever it be, from host and hostess. Gossip is a part of their trade; and it is wise to avoid giving them occasion. I will give you, when we are within, a letter from my young lord, and read it to you, too, as perchance you cannot do that yourself; but it will let the people see that I am not without authority to hold converse with you, which may be needful."

"Nay," answered Ella, "I can read it myself; for I have not been without such training."

"Ay, I forgot," rejoined Ned Dyram, with one of his light sneers; "had you been a princess, you would not have been able to read. Such clerk-craft is only fit for citizens and monks. I wonder how Childe Richard learned to read and write. I fear it will spoil him for a soldier."

The satire was not altogether just; for, though it did not unfrequently happen that high nobles and celebrated warriors and statesmen were as illiterate as the merest boors, and in some instances (especially after the wars of the Roses had deluged the land with blood, and interrupted all the peaceful arts of life) the barons affected to treat with sovereign contempt the cultivation of the mind, yet such was not by any means so generally the case, as the pride of modern civilization has been eager to show. We have proofs incontestable, that, in the reigns of Richard II., Henry IV., and

Henry V., men were by no means so generally ignorant as has been supposed. The House of Lancaster was proud of its patronage of literature; and, though more than one valiant nobleman could not sign his own name, or could do so with difficulty, there is much reason to believe that the exceptions have been pointed out as the rule; for we know that many a citizen of London could not only maintain, without the aid of another hand, long and intricate correspondence with foreign merchants, but also took delight in the reading during winter's nights of Chaucer and Gower, if not in studying secretly the writings of Wickliffe and his disciples.

Ella Brune replied not, but walked on into the house, calling the good hostess, who, in that day as in others, often supplied the place of both master and mistress in a house of public entertainment. Ned Dyram followed her with his eyes into the house, scrutinizing with keen and wondering glance the beauties of form which even the long loose robe of serge could not fully conceal. He marvelled at the grace he beheld, even more rare at that day amongst the sons and daughters of toil than at present; and, although the pride of rank and station could not, in his case, suggest the bold disregard of all law and decency in seeking the gratification of passion, his feelings towards Ella Brune were not very far different from those of Sir Simeon of Roydon. He might have more respect for the opinion of the world, by which he hoped to rise; he might even have more respect for, and more belief in, virtue, for he was a wiser man; he might seek to obtain his ends by other means; he was even not incapable of love,—strong, passionate, overpowering love; but the moving power was the same. It was all animal; for, strange to say, though his intellect was far superior to that of most men of his day; though he had far more mind than was needful, or even advantageous, in his commerce with the world of that age, his impulses were all animal towards others. That which he cared for little in himself, he admired, he almost worshipped, in woman. It was beauty of form and feature only that attracted him. Mind he cared not for—he thought not of; nay, up to that moment, he perhaps either doubted whether it existed in the other sex, or thought it a disadvantage if it did. Even more, the heart itself he valued little; or, rather, that strange and complex tissue of emotions, springing from what source we know not, entwined with our mortal nature—by what delicate threads who can say?—which we are accustomed to ascribe to the heart, he regarded but as an almost worthless adjunct.

His was the eager love—forgive me, if I profane what should be a holy name, rather than use a coarser term—of the wild beast; the appetite of the tiger, only tempered by the shrewdness of the fox. I mean not to say it always remained so; for, under the power of passion and circumstances, the human heart is tutored as a child. Neither would I say that aught like love had yet touched his bosom for Ella Brune. I speak but of his ordinary feeling towards woman; but feelings of that sort are sooner roused than those of a higher nature. He saw that she was very beautiful—more beautiful, he thought, than any woman of his own station that ever he had beheld; and that was enough to make him determine upon counteracting his master's wishes and counsel, and persuading Ella to turn her steps in the same course in which his own were directed. He knew not how willing she was to be persuaded; he knew not that she was at heart already resolved: but he managed skilfully, he watched shrewdly, through the whole of his after-communications with her during the day. He discovered much—he discovered all, indeed, but one deep secret, which might have been penetrated by a woman's eyes, but which was hid from his, with all their keenness—the motive, the feeling, that led her so strongly in the very path he wished. He saw, indeed, that she was so inclined; he saw that there was a voice always seconding him in her heart, and he took especial care to furnish that voice with arguments which seemed irresistible. He contrived, too, to win upon her much; for there was in his conversation that mingling of frankness and flattering courtesy, of apparent carelessness of pleasing, with all the arts of giving pleasure, and that range of desultory knowledge and tone of superior mind, with apparent simplicity of manner, and contempt for assumption, which of all things are the most calculated to dazzle and impress for a time. 'Tis the lighter qualities that catch, the deeper ones that bind; and though, had there been a comparison drawn between him, who was her companion for a great part of that evening, and Richard of Woodville, Ella Brune would have laughed in scorn; yet she listened, well pleased, to the varied conversation with which he whiled away the hours, when she could wean her thoughts from dearer, though more painful themes; yielded to his arguments when they seconded the purposes of her own heart, and readily accepted his offered service to aid her in executing the plan she adopted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JOURNEY AND THE VOYAGE.

The sun rose behind some light grey clouds, and the blue sky was veiled; but the birds made the welkin ring from amongst the young leaves of the April trees, and told of the coming brightness of the day. Why, or wherefore, let men of science say; but one thing is certain, the seasons at that time were different from those at present; they were earlier; they were more distinct; spring was spring, and summer was summer; and winter, content with holding his own right stiffly, did not attempt to invade the rights of his brethren. Far in the north of England we had vines growing and bearing fruit in the open air. At Hexham there was a vineyard; and wine was made in more than one English county—not very good, it is to be supposed, but still good enough to be drunk, and to prove the longer and more genial reign of summer in our island. Thus, though the morning was grey, as I have said, and April had not yet come to an end, the air was as warm as it is often now in June, and every bank was already covered with flowers.

There were horses before the gate of Richard of Woodville's house, and men busily preparing them for a journey. There was the heavy charger, or battle horse, with tall and bony limbs, well fitted to bear up under the weight of a steel-covered rider; and the lighter, but still powerful palfrey, somewhat of the size and make of a hunter of the present day, to carry the master along the road. Besides these, appeared many another beast; horses for the yeomen and servants, and horses and mules for the baggage: the load of armour for himself and for his men which the young adventurer carried with him, requiring not a few of those serviceable brutes who bow their heads to man's will, in order to carry it to the sea-shore. At length all was prepared; the packs were put upon the beasts, the drivers were at their heads, the yeomen by their saddles; and with ten stout men and two boys, fourteen horses, three mules, a plentiful store of arms, and all the money he could raise, in his wallet, Richard of Woodville issued forth, gave his last commands to the old man and woman whom he left behind in the hall, and, springing into the saddle, began his journey towards Dover.

It was not without a sigh that he set out; for he was leaving the land in which Mary Markham dwelt; but yet he thought he was going to win honour for her sake—perchance to win her herself; and all the bright hopes and expectations of youth soon gathered on his way, more vivid and more glowing in his case, than they could be in that of any youth of the present day, taking his departure for foreign lands. If at present each country knows but very little in reality of its neighbour, if England entertains false views and wild imaginations regarding France and her people, and France has not the slightest particle of knowledge in regard to the feelings, character, and habits of thought, of the English, how much more must such have been the case in an age when communication was rare, and then only or chiefly by word of mouth! It is true that the state of geographical knowledge was not so low as has been generally supposed, for we are very apt to look upon ourselves as wonderful people, and to imagine that nobody knew anything before ourselves; and the difference between former ages and the present is more in the general diffusion of knowledge than in its amount. In the very age of which we speak, the famous Henry of Vasco was pursuing his great project for reaching India by passing round Africa, attempting to establish Portuguese stations on the coast of that continent, and to communicate with the natives; "e poi aver con essi loro comercio per l'onore e utiltà del Regno." *

The highways of Europe were well known; for mercantile transactions between country and country were carried on upon a system so totally different from that existing at present, that multitudes of the citizens of every commercial state were constantly wandering over the face of Europe, and bringing home anecdotes, if not much solid information, regarding the distant lands they had visited. The merchant frequently accompanied his goods; and the smaller traders, especially from the cities of Italy, travelled every season from fair to fair, and mart to mart, throughout the whole of the civilized world. Besides the communications which thus took place, and the information thus diffused, intelligence of a different sort was carried by another class, who may have been said to have represented in that day the tourists of the present. Chivalry, indeed, had greatly declined since the days of Richard I., and even since the time of the Black Prince; but still it was a constant practice for young knights

* Barros, Dec. i. lib. i. cap. 6.

and nobles of every country to visit the courts of foreign princes, in order either to acquire the warlike arts then practised, or to gain distinction by feats of arms. Few books of travels were written, it is true, and fewer read; for the art of printing had not yet, by the easy multiplication of copies, placed the stores of learning within the reach of the many; and one of the sources from which vast information might have been derived was cut off, by the general abhorrence with which the ever-wandering tribes of Israel were regarded, and the habitual taciturnity which had thus been produced in a people naturally loquacious.

Still a great deal of desultory and vague information concerning distant lands was floating about society. Strange tales were told, it is true, and truth deformed by fiction; but imagination had plenty of materials out of which to form splendid structures; and bright pictures of the far and the future, certainly did present themselves to the glowing fancy of Richard of Woodville, as he rode on upon his way. Knowing his own courage, his own skill, and his own strength; energetic in character, resolute, and persevering; animated by love, and encouraged by hope, he might well look forward to the world as a harvest-field of glory, into which he was about to put the sickle. Then came all the vague and misty representations that imagination could call up of distant courts and foreign princes, tilt and tournament, and high emprize; and the adventurous spirit of the times of old made his bosom thrill with dim visions of strange scenes and unknown places, accidents, difficulties, dangers, enterprises,—the hard rough ore from which the gold of praise and renown was still to be extracted.

Movement and exertion are the life-blood of youth; and as he rode on, the spirits of Richard of Woodville rose higher and higher; expectation expanded; the regrets were left behind; and "Onward, onward!" was the cry of his heart, as the grey cloud broke into mottled flakes upon the sky, and gradually disappeared, as if absorbed by the blue heaven which it had previously covered.

Through the rich wooded land of England he took his way for four days, contriving generally to make his resting-place for the night at some town which possessed the advantage of an inn, or at the house of some old friend of his family, where he was sure of kind reception. In the day-time, however, many of his meals were eaten in the open field, or under the broad shade of the trees; and, as he sat, after partaking lightly of the food which had been

brought with him, while the horses were finishing their provender, the birds singing in the trees above often brought back to his mind the words of the minstrel's girl's lay:—

"The lark shall sing on high,
Whatever shore thou rovest;
The nightingale shall try
To call up her thou lovest.
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find;
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale."

It seemed like the song of hope, and rang in his ear, mingling with the notes of the blackbird, the thrush, and the wood-lark, and promising success and happiness. The words, too, called up the image of Mary Markham, as she herself would have wished, the end and object of all his hopes and wishes, the crowning reward of every deed he thought to do. It is true that, with her, still appeared to the eye of memory the form of poor Ella Brune; but it was with very different sensations. He felt grateful to her for that cheering song; and, indeed, how often is it in life, that a few words of hope and encouragement are more valuable to us, are of more real and solid benefit, than a gift of gold and gems! for moral support to the heart of man, in the hour of difficulty, is worth all that the careless hand of wealth and power can bestow. But he felt no love—he might admire her, he might think her beautiful; but it was with the cold admiration of taste, not with passion. Her loveliness to him was as that of a picture or statue, and the only warmer sensations that he felt when he thought of her, were pity for her misfortunes, and interest in her fate. Nor did this arise either in coldness of nature, or the haughty pride of noble birth; but love was with him, as it was with many in days somewhat previous to his own, very different from the transitory and mutable passion which so generally bears that name. It was the absorbing principle of his whole nature, the ruling power of his heart, concentrated all in one—indivisible—unchangeable—a spirit in his spirit, a devotion, almost a worship. I say not, that in former times, before he had felt that passion, he might not have lived as others lived,—that he might not have trifled with the fair and bright wherever he found them,—that the fiery eagerness of youthful blood might not have carried him to folly, and to wrong; but from the moment he had learned to love Mary

Markham, his heart had been for her alone, and the gate of his affections was closed against all others. Thus, could she have seen his inmost thoughts, she would have found how fully justified was her confidence, and might, perhaps, have blushed to recollect that one doubt had ever crossed her bosom.

It was about three o'clock on the evening of the fourth day, that Richard of Woodville—passing along by the priory, and leaving the church of St. Mary to the left, with the towers of the old castle frowning from the steep above, on one side, and the round chapel of the ancient temple house peeping over the hill upon the other—entered the small town of Dover, and approached the sea-shore, which, in those days, unencumbered by the immense masses of shingle that have since been rolled along the coast, extended but a short distance from the base of the primeval cliffs. Thus the town was then thrust into the narrow valley at the foot of the two hills; and the moment that the houses were passed, the wide scene of the sea, with a number of small vessels lying almost close to the shore, broke upon the eye.

The associations of the people naturally gave to the principal hostelry of the place a similar name to that which it has ever since borne. Though very differently situated and maintained, the chief place of public reception in the town of Dover was then called the Bark, as it is now called the Ship; and although that port was not the principal place through which the communication between England and France took place, yet, ever since Calais had been an English possession, a great traffic had been carried on by Dover, so that the hostelry of the Bark was one of the most comfortable and best appointed in the kingdom.

As every man of wealth and consequence who landed at, or embarked from, that port, brought his horses with him, numerous ostlers and stable boys were always ready to take charge of the guests' steeds; and as soon as a gentleman's train was seen coming down the street, loud shouts from the host called forth a crowd of expectant faces, and ready hands to give assistance to the arriving guests.

The first amongst those who appeared was Ned Dyram, in his blue tabard; and, although he did not condescend to hold his master's stirrup, but left that task to others, yet he advanced to the young gentleman's side, with some pride in the numbers and gallant appearance of the train, and informed him as he dismounted, that he had performed his errand in London; and also the charge which he had received for Dover,

having engaged a large bark, named the Lucy Neville, to carry his master, with horses and attendants, to the small town of Nieuport, on the Flemish coast.

"The tide will serve at five o'clock, sir," he said. "There is time to embark the horses and baggage, if you will, while you and the men sup. We have plenty of hands here to help; and I will see it all done safely. If not, we must stop till to-morrow."

The host put in his word, however, observing, "that the young lord might be tired with a long journey, that it were better to wait and part with the morning tide, and that it was Friday—an inauspicious day to put to sea."

But the surface of the water was calm; the sky was bright and clear; and it was the last day of the period which Woodville had fixed, in his communication with the King, for his stay in England. He therefore determined to follow the opinion of Ned Dyram, instead of that of the host, which there was no absolute impossibility to prevent him from supposing interested; and, ordering his horses and luggage to be embarked, with manifold charges to his skilful attendant to look well to the safety of the chargers, he sat down to the ample supper which was soon after on the board, proposing to be down on the beach before his orders regarding the horses were put in execution.

The master and the man, in those more simple days, sat at the same board in the inn, and often at the castle: and as he knew that his own rising would be a signal for the rest to cease their meal, Richard of Woodville remained for several minutes, to allow the more slow and deliberate to accomplish the great function of the mindless. At length, however, he rose, discharged his score, added largess to payment, and then, with the "fair voyage, noble sir," of the host, and the good wishes of drawers and ostlers, proceeded to the shore, where he fully expected to find Ned Dyram busily engaged in shipping his baggage.

No one was there, however, but two or three of the horse-boys of the hotel, who saluted him with the tidings that all was on board. As he cast his eyes seaward, he saw a large boat returning from a ship at some small distance from the shore, with Ned Dyram in the stern; and in a few minutes after, the active superintendent of the embarkation jumped ashore, with a laugh, saying, "Ah, sir! so you could not trust me! But all is safe, no hide rubbed off, no knees broken, no shoulder shaken; and if they do not kick themselves to pieces before we reach Nieuport, you will have as

stout chargers to ride as any in Burgundy. But you are not going to embark yet? The tide will not serve for half an hour; and I have left my saddle-bags at the hostel."

"Well, run quick and get them," replied his master. "I would fain see how all is stowed before we sail."

"And know little about it when you do see," answered Ned Dyram, with his usual rude bluntness, or that which appeared to be such.

Richard of Woodville might feel a little angry at his saucy tone; but it was only a passing emotion, easily extinguished. "I certainly know little of stowing ships, my good friend," he answered, "seeing that I never was in one in my life; but common sense is a great thing, Master Dyram; and I am not likely to be mistaken as to whether the horses are so placed as to run the least chance of hurting themselves or each other. Back to the hostel, then, as I ordered, with all speed; and do not let me have to wait for you."

The last words were spoken in a tone of command, which did not much please the hearer; but there were certain feelings in his breast that rendered him unwilling to offend a master on whom he had no tie of old services; and he therefore hurried his pace away, as long as he was within sight. He contrived to keep Woodville waiting, however, for at least twenty minutes; and as the young gentleman gazed towards the ship, he saw the large and cumbersome sails slowly unfurled, and preparations of various kinds made for putting to sea. His patience was well nigh exhausted, and he had already taken his place in the boat, intending to bid the men pull away, when Ned Dyram appeared, coming down from the inn, and carrying his saddle bags over his arm, while a man followed bearing a heavy coffre.

Richard of Woodville smiled, saying to his yeoman of the stirrup, "I knew not our friend Ned had such mass of baggage, or I would have given him further time."

"He has got his tools there, I doubt," observed the old armourer; "for he is a famous workman, both in steel and gilding, though somewhat new-fangled in his notions."

The minute after Ned Dyram was seated in the boat, the men gave way, and over the calm waters of a sea just rippled by a soft but favourable breeze, she flew towards the ship. All on board were in the bustle of departure; and, before Richard of Woodville had examined the horses, and satisfied himself that everything had been carefully and thoughtfully arranged for their safety, the bark was under weigh. He

looked round for Ned Dyram, willing to make up, by some praise of his attention and judgment, for any sharpness of speech on the shore; but the yeomen told him that their comrade had gone below, saying that he was always sick at sea; and the young gentleman, escaping from the crowd and confusion which existed amongst horses and men in the fore part of the vessel, retired to the stern, and took up his position near the steersman, while the cliffs of England, and the tall towers of the castle, with the churches and houses below, slowly diminished, as moving heavily through the water the bark laid her course for the town of Nieuport.

The bustle soon ceased upon the deck; some of the yeomen laid themselves down to sleep, if sleep they might; the rest were down below; the mariners who remained on deck proceeded with their ordinary tasks in silence; the wind wafted them gently along with a soft and easy motion; and the sun, declining in the sky, shone along the bosom of the sea as if laying down a golden path, midway between France and England.

The feeling of parting from home was renewed in the bosom of Richard of Woodville, as he gazed back at the slowly waning shores of his native land, leaning his arms, folded on his chest, upon the bulwark of the stern. He felt no inclination to converse; and the man at the huge tiller seemed little disposed to speak. All was silent, except an occasional snatch of a rude song, with which one of the seamen cheered his idleness from time to time; till at length a sweeter voice was heard, singing in low and almost plaintive tones; and, turning suddenly round, Woodville beheld a female figure, clothed in black, leaning upon the opposite side of the vessel, and gazing, like himself, upon the receding cliffs of England. He listened as she sang; but the first stanza of her lay was done before he could catch the words.

SONG.

I.

Oh, leave longing! dream no more
Of sunny hours to come;
Dreams that fade like that loved shore,
Where once we made our home.
Farewell; and sing lullabie
To all the joys that pass us by.
They go to sleep,
Though we may weep,
And never come again.—Nennie.

II.

Oh, leave sighing! thought is vain
Of all the treasures past;
Hope and fear, delight and pain,
Are clay, and cannot last.
Farewell; and sing lullabie
To all the things that pass us by.
They go to sleep,
Though we may weep,
And never come again.—Nennie.

III.

Oh, leave looking—on the wave
That dances in the ray;
See! now it curls its crest so brave,
And now it melts away.
Farewell; and sing lullabie
To it and all that passes by.
They go to sleep,
Though we may weep,
And never come again.—Nennie.

The voice was so sweet, the music was so plaintive, that, without knowing it, and though she sang in a low and subdued tone, the singer had every ear turned to listen. Richard of Woodville did not require to see her face, to recognise Ella Brune, though the change in her dress might have proved an effectual means of concealment, had she been disposed to hide herself from him. The peculiarly mellow and musical tone of her voice was enough; and, as soon as the lay ceased, Woodville crossed over and spoke to her.

But she showed no surprise at seeing him, greeting him with a smile, and answering gaily to his inquiry, if she knew that he was in the same ship,—"Certainly; that was the reason that I came. I am going to be headstrong, noble sir, for the rest of my life. I would not go to York, as you see; for I fancied that when people have got hold of that which does not belong to them, they may strike at any hand which strives to take it away, especially if it be that of a woman."

"You are right, Ella," answered Richard of Woodville; "I had not thought of that."

"Then I am going to Peronne, or it may be to Dijon," continued Ella, in a tone still light, notwithstanding the somewhat melancholy character of her song; "because I think I can be of service, perhaps, to some who have been kind to me; and then, too, I intend to amass great store of money, and marry a scrivener."

"You are gay, Ella," replied Woodville, somewhat gravely,

sitting down beside her, as she still leaned over the side of the vessel.

"Do you see those waves?" she said; "and how they dance and sparkle?"

"Yes," replied her companion; "what then?"

"There are depths beneath!" answered Ella. "Henceforth I will be gay—on the surface, at least, like the sunny sea; but it is because I have more profound thoughts within me, than when I seemed most sad. Keep my secret, noble sir."

"That I will, Ella," replied Woodville; "but tell me—Did my servant find you out?"

"Yes, and did me good service," answered the girl; "for he brought me here."

"And the poor fool was afraid I should be offended," said Woodville; "for he has avoided mentioning your name."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Ella; "for he knew, I believe, that you did not wish to have me in your company. 'Tis a charge, noble sir; and a poor minstrel girl is not fit for a high gentleman's train."

"Nay, you do me wrong, Ella," answered Richard of Woodville; "right willingly, my poor girl, now as heretofore, in this as in other things, will I give you protection. I thought, indeed, that it might be better for yourself to remain; and there were reasons, moreover, that you do not know."

"Nay, but I do know, sir," replied Ella, interrupting him; "I know it all. I have made acquaintance with your lady-love, and sat at her knee and sung to her; and she has befriended the poor lonely girl, as you did before her; and she told me, she would neither doubt you nor me, though you took me on your journey, and protected me by the way."

"Dear, frank Mary!" exclaimed Richard of Woodville; "there spoke her own true heart. But tell me more about this, Ella. How did you see her?—when?—where?"

Ella Brune did as he bade her, and related to him all that had occurred to her since he had left London. As she spoke, her eye was generally averted; but sometimes it glanced to his countenance, especially when she either referred to Sir Simeon of Roydon, or to Mary Markham; and she saw with pleasure the flush upon her young protector's cheek, the knitted brow, and flashing eye, when she told the outrage she had endured, and the look of generous satisfaction which lighted up each feature, when she spoke of the protection she had received from good Sir Philip Beauchamp and the King.

"Ah! my noble uncle!" he said; "he is, indeed, somewhat harsh and rash when the warm blood stirs within him, as all these old knights are, Ella; but there never was a man more ready to draw the sword, or open the purse, for those who are in need of either, than himself. And so the King befriended you, too? He is well worthy of his royal name, and has done but justice on this arch knave."

"Not half justice," answered Ella Brune, with a sudden change of tone; "but no matter for that, the hand of vengeance will reach him one of these days. He cannot hide his deeds from God!—But you speak not of your sweet lady:—was she not kind to the poor minstrel girl?"

"She is always kind," answered Richard of Woodville. "God's blessing on her blithe heart! She would fain give the same sunshine that is within her own soft bosom, to every one around her."

"That cannot be," answered Ella Brune; "there are some made to be happy, some unhappy, in this world. Fortune has but a certain store, and she parts it unequally, though, perhaps, not blindly, as men say. But there's a place where all is made equal;" and, resuming quickly her lighter tone, she went on, dwelling long upon every word that Mary Markham had said to her, seeming to take a pleasure in that, which had in reality no small portion of pain mingled with it. Such is not infrequently the case, indeed, with almost all men; for it is wonderful how the bee of the human heart will contrive to extract sweets from the bitter things of life; but, perhaps, there might be a little art in it—innocent art, indeed—most innocent; for its only object was to hide from the eyes of Richard of Woodville that there was any feeling in her bosom towards him but deep gratitude and perfect confidence. She dwelt then upon her he loved, as if the subject were as pleasing to her as to himself; and, though she spoke gaily—sometimes almost in a jesting tone—yet there were touches of deep feeling mingled every now and then with all she said, which made him perceive that, as she herself had told him, the lightness was in manner alone, and not in the mind.

At all events, her conduct had one effect which she could have desired: it removed all doubt and hesitation from the mind of Richard of Woodville, if any such remained, in regard to his behaviour towards her;—it did away all scruple as to guarding and protecting her on the way, as far as their roads lay together.

One point, indeed, in her account puzzled him, and excited

his curiosity—which was the sudden departure of his uncle and Mary from Westminster. "Well," he thought, "I never loved the task of discovering mysteries, and have ever been willing to leave Time to solve them, else I should have troubled my brain somewhat more about my sweet Mary's fate and history than I have done;" and, after pondering for a few moments more, he turned again to other subjects with Ella Brune. Pleased and entertained by her conversation, he scarcely turned his eyes back towards the coast of England, till the cliffs had become faint and grey, like a cloud upon the edge of the sky; while the sun setting over the waters seemed to change them into liquid fire. In the meantime, wafted on by the light breeze, the ship continued her slow way; and, as the orb of day sank below the horizon, the moon, which had been up for some little time, poured her silver light upon the water—no longer outshone by the brighter beams. The sky remained pure and blue; the stars appeared faint amidst the lustre shed by the queen of night; and the water, dashing from the stern, looked like waves of molten silver as they flowed away. Nothing could be more calm, more grand, more beautiful, than the scene, with the wide expanse of heaven, and the wide expanse of sea, and the pure lights above and the glistening ripple below, and the curtain of darkness hanging round the verge of all things, like the deep veil of a past and future eternity.

Neither Ella Brune nor Richard of Woodville could help feeling the influence of the hour, for the grand things of nature raise and elevate the human heart, whether man will or not. They lived in a rude age, it is true; but the spirit of each was high and fine; and their conversation gradually took its tone from the scene that met their eyes on all sides. They might not know that those stars were unnumbered suns, or wandering planets, like their own; they might not know that the bright broad orb that spread her light upon the waves was an attendant world, wheeling through space around that in which they lived; they had no skill to people the immensity with miracles of creative power; but they knew that all they beheld was the handiwork of God, and they felt that it was very beautiful and very good. Their souls were naturally led up to the contemplation of things above the earth; and while Richard of Woodville learned hope and confidence in Him who had spread the heaven with stars and clothed the earth in loveliness, Ella Brune took to her heart, from the same source, the lesson of firmness and resignation.

They gazed, they wondered, they adored; and each spoke

to the other some of the feelings which were in their hearts; but some only, for there were many that they could not speak.

"I remember," said Ella, at length, in a low voice, "when I was at a town called Innsbruck, in the midst of beautiful mountains, hearing the nuns chant a hymn, which I caught up by ear; and the poor old man and I turned it, as best we might, into English, and used often in our wanderings to console ourselves with singing it, when little else had we to console us. It comes into my mind to-night more than ever."

"Let me hear it, then, Ella," said Richard of Woodville; "I love all music."

"I will sing it," replied Ella; "but you must not hear it only. You must join in heart, if not in voice."

HYMN.

Oh glorious! oh mighty! Lord God of salvation!
Thy name let us praise from the depth of the heart;
Let tongue sing to tongue, and nation to nation,
And in the glad hymn, all thy works bear a part.

The tops of the mountains with praises are ringing,
The depths of the valleys re-echo the cry;
The waves of the ocean Thy glories are singing,
The clouds and the winds find a voice as they fly;

The weakest, the strongest, the lowly, the glorious,
The living on earth, and the dead in the grave!
For the arm of thy Son over death is victorious,
With power to redeem, and with mercy to save.

Oh glorious! oh mighty! Lord God of salvation!
To Thee let us sing from the depth of the heart;
Let tongue tell to tongue, and nation to nation,
How bountiful, gracious, and holy Thou art.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FOREIGN LAND.

The night had fallen nearly an hour ere Richard of Woodville, Ella Brune, and the young Englishman's attendants, were seated for the first time round the table of a small Flemish inn, on the day after they had left the shores of their native land. Strange as it may seem, that with a wind not

unfavourable, somewhat more than twenty-four hours should be occupied by a voyage of less than sixty miles; yet such had been the case between Dover and Nieuport; for it was more than five hours past noon, on the evening following that on which they set sail, when the bark that bore Richard of Woodville entered the mouth of the little river on which that port is situated. But the art of navigation was little known in those times; and the wind, which, though directly fair at first, was never strong enough to give the ship much way through the water, veered round soon after midnight, not to a point exactly contrary, but to one which favoured the course of the voyagers very little; so that if it had not again changed before night, another twelve hours might have been passed upon the sea. At length, however, the land, which had been for some time in sight, grew clear and more strongly marked; the towers of village churches were seen, distinct; and, anchoring as near the town as possible, the disembarkation was commenced without delay, in order to accomplish the task before nightfall. Nevertheless, ere horses and baggage were all safely on the shore, the day had well nigh come to an end; so that, as I have said, it was dark before the young Englishman, Ella Brune, and his attendants, were seated round the table of the poor hostel, which was the only place of entertainment that the town afforded.

Here first the services of the poor minstrel girl became really valuable to her protector; for notwithstanding the proximity of the English coast, not a soul in the hostel could speak aught else but the Flemish tongue. There were evidently numerous other guests, all requiring entertainment; though with a strange exclusiveness, hardly known in those days, they kept themselves closely shut up in the rooms which had been retained for their own accommodation; and as neither Woodville nor any of his train, not even excepting the learned Ned Dyram, knew one word of the language, the whole party would have fared ill, had not Ella, in tones which rendered even that harsh jargon sweet, given, in the quality of interpreter, the necessary orders for all that was required.

The greatest difficulty seemed to be in obtaining chambers, in which the somewhat numerous party of the young cavalier could find repose. The stable and the adjoining barn were full already of horses and mules, even to overflowing, otherwise they might have afforded accommodation to men who were accustomed in their own country to lie hard, and yet sleep lightly; and only one room of any size was vacant, with a

small closet hard by, containing a low pallet. The latter, Richard of Woodville at once assigned to Ella Brune; the former he reserved for himself and three of his men, of whom Ned Dyram was one; and it was finally arranged that the rest should be provided with dry hay, mown from the neighbouring sandy ground, in the hall where they supped.

As soon as the meal was over, the board was cleared, the hay brought in, Ella retired to her pallet, Richard of Woodville to his; straw was laid down across his door for the three men; and the whole party were soon in the arms of slumber. Richard of Woodville dreamed, however, with visions coming thick and fast, and changing as they came, like the figures in a phantasmagoria. Now he was in the King's court, defying Simeon of Roydon to battle; now at the old hall at Dunbury, with Isabel, and Dacre, and Mary, and poor Catherine Beauchamp herself. Then suddenly the scene changed, and he was by the moonlight stream near Abbot's Ann, with Hal of Hadnock. He heard a voice call to him from the water: "Richard! Richard!" it seemed to cry, "Save me! Revenge me!—Richard, Richard of Woodville!"

He started suddenly up; but the voice still rang in his ears: "Richard of Woodville," it said, or seemed to say.

"I hear," he exclaims. "Who calls?"

"What maiden is this thou hast with thee?" asked the voice. "Beware! Beware! Love will not be lightlied."

"Who is it that speaks?" demanded Richard of Woodville, rubbing his eyes in surprise and bewilderment. But no one answered, and all was silence. "Surely, some one spoke," said the young gentleman; "if so, let them speak again."

There was no reply; and Woodville was inclined to believe that his dream had been prolonged after he had fancied himself awake; but, as he sat up and listened, he heard the movement of some one amongst the straw at the end of the room; and, well aware that, if any of the men were watchful, it must be he who had the most mind, he exclaimed, "Ned Dyram! are you asleep?"

"No, sir," replied the man; "I have been awake these ten minutes."

"Did you hear any one speak just now?" demanded Woodville.

"To be sure I did," answered Dyram. "Some one called you by your name: it was that which roused me. They asked

about the maiden, Ella, and bade you beware. Foul fall them! we have witches near."

Richard of Woodville instantly sprang from his bed, and advanced towards the casement. The moon was still shining; but when the young gentleman gazed forth, all without was in the still quiet of midnight. He could see the court of the hostel, and the angle of the building, formed by a sort of wing which projected from the rest, close to where he stood; but all was calm; and not a creature seemed stirring. He looked up to the windows in the wing, but there was no light in any.

"Whence did the sound seem to come, Ned?" he asked.

"It seemed in the room," replied the man. "Shall I strike a light? I have always wherewithal about me."

Richard of Woodville bade him do so; and a lamp was soon lighted. But Ned Dyram and his master searched the room in vain; and the other two inhabitants of the chamber slept soundly through all. At length, puzzled and disappointed, Woodville retired to bed again, and the light was extinguished; but the young gentleman did not sleep for some hours, listening eagerly for any sound. None made itself heard through the rest of the night, but the hard breathing of the sleeping yeomen; and, after watching till near morning, slumber once more fell upon Woodville's eyes, and he did not wake till the sun had been up an hour. The yeomen had already quitted the room without his having perceived it; and, dressing himself in haste, he proceeded to inquire of the host what strangers had lodged in his house during the preceding night, besides himself and his own attendants?

"None, but a party of monks and nuns," the man replied, through the interpretation of Ella Brune, whom Woodville had called to his aid.

"Ask him, Ella, of what country they were," said Richard of Woodville. But the man replied to Ella's question, that they were all Hainaulters, except two who came from Friesland; and that they were going on a pilgrimage to Rome.

Richard of Woodville was more puzzled than ever. For a moment he suspected that Ned Dyram might have played some trick upon him; for, notwithstanding the bluntness of that worthy personage, a doubt of his being really as honest and straightforward as the King believed him, had entered into Woodville's mind, he knew not well why. Reflecting, however, on the fact of Ned Dyram having encouraged Ella

Brune to accompany them to the Continent, notwithstanding the opposite advice given by his master, the young gentleman soon rejected that suspicion, and remained as much troubled to account for what had occurred as before.

No farther information was to be obtained; and, as soon as his men and horses were prepared, Richard of Woodville commenced his journey towards Ghent; directing his steps in the first instance to Ghistel, through a country which presented, at that period, nothing but wide uncultivated plains and salt marshes, with here and there a village raised on any little eminence, or a feudal castle near the shore, from which, even in those days, and still more in the times preceding, numerous bands of pirates were sent forth, sweeping the sea, and occasionally entering the mouths of the English rivers. The inhabitants of the whole tract, from Ostend to the Aa, were notorious for their savage and blood-thirsty character; so much so, indeed, as to have obtained the name of the Scythians of the North; and Ella Brune, as she rode beside Richard of Woodville, on one of the mules which he had brought with him, and which had been freed from its share of the baggage to bear her lighter weight, warned her companion to be upon his guard, as the passage through that part of the country was still considered unsafe, notwithstanding some improvement in the manners of the people.

At first Woodville only smiled, replying, that he thought a party of eleven stout Englishmen were sufficient to deal with any troop of rude Flemings who might come against them. But she went on to give him many anecdotes of brutal outrages that had been committed within a very few years, which somewhat changed his opinion; and the appearance of a body of five or six horsemen, seemingly watching the advance of his little force, induced him to take some precautions. Halting within sight of the church of Lombards Heyde, he caused his archers to put on the cuirasses and salades with which they were provided for active service, and ordered them to have their bows ready for action at a moment's notice. He also partly armed himself, and directed the two pages to follow him close by with his casque, shield, and lance; and thus, keeping a firm array, the party moved forward to Ghistel, watched all the way along the road by the party they had at first observed, but without any attack being made. Their military display, indeed, proved in some degree detrimental to them; for that small town had been surrounded by ramparts some sixty or seventy years before,

and the party of strangers was refused admission at the gates. On the offer of payment, however, some of the inhabitants readily enough brought forth corn and water for the horses, and food and hydromel for the men. One or two of them could speak French also; and from them Richard of Woodville obtained clear directions for pursuing his way towards Ghent. He now found that he had already somewhat deviated from the right track in coming to Ghistel at all; but as he was there, the men said that the best course for him to follow was to cross the country direct by Erneghem, and thence march through the forest of Winendale, along the high raised causeway which commenced at the gates of Ghistel.

As no likelihood of obtaining any nearer place of repose presented itself, the young Englishman proceeded to follow these directions, and towards three o'clock of the same day reached the village of Erneghem. Much to his disappointment, however, he found no place of entertainment there. The inhabitants were mostly in the fields, and but little food was to be obtained for man or horse. On his own account, Richard of Woodville cared little; nor did he much heed his men being broken in to privations, which he well knew must often befal them; but for Ella Brune he was more anxious, and expressed to her kindly his fears lest she should suffer from hunger and fatigue. But Ella laughed lightly, replying, "I am more accustomed to it than any of you."

Onward from that place, the march of the travellers was through the deep green wood, which, at that time, extended from a few miles to the south of Thorout, almost to the gates of Bruges. The soil was marshy, the road heavy, and full of sand; but the weather was still beautifully clear, the sun shone bright and warm, a thousand wild flowers grew up under the shade, and the leafy branches of the forest offered no unpleasant canopy, even at that early period of the year. Neither village, nor house, nor woodman's hut, nor castle tower, presented itself for several miles; and as they approached a spot where the road divided into two, with no friendly indication to the weary traveller of the place to which either tended, Richard of Woodville turned towards Ella, asking—"Which, think you, I ought to follow, my fair maid? or had I better, like the knight-errant of old, give the choice up to my horse, and see what his sagacity will do, where my own entirely fails me?"

"What little I have," replied Ella, "would be of no good

here; but I think the best road to choose would be the most beaten one."

"Often the safest, Ella," replied Richard, with a smile.

"Yet not always the most pleasant," answered Ella Brune. But, as she spoke, a human figure came in sight, the first that they had seen since they had left Erneghem. It was that of a stout monk, in a grey gown, with a large straw hat upon his head, tied with a riband under his beard. He was mounted upon a tall powerful ass, which was ambling along with him at a good pace; and though he pulled up when he saw the large party of strangers pausing at the separation of the two roads, he came forward at a slower pace the next moment, and, after a careful inspection of the young leader's person, saluted him courteously in the French tongue.—"Give you good day, and benedicite, my son," he said, bowing his head. "You seem embarrassed about your way. Can I help you?"

"Infinitely, good father," replied Richard of Woodville, "if you can direct me on the road. I am going to Ghent."

"Why, you can never reach Ghent to-night, my son," exclaimed the monk; "and you will find but poor lodging till you get to Thielt, which you will not reach till midnight, unless you ride hard."

"We shall want both food and lodging long ere that, good father," said Richard of Woodville. "Whither does this road you have just come up lead?"

"To Aertrick," replied the monk: "but you will get neither food nor beds there, my son, for so large a troop. 'Tis a poor place, and the priest is a poor man, who would lodge a single traveller willingly enough, but has no room for more, nor bread to give them; but your best plan will be to come with me to Thorout. 'Tis a little out of your way to Ghent; but yet you can reach that city to-morrow, if you will, though 'tis a long day's journey—well nigh ten leagues."

"Is there a hostel in Thorout, good father?" asked Richard of Woodville.

"One of the most miserable in Flanders, Hainault, or Brabant," answered the monk, laughing; "but we have a priory there, where we are always willing to lodge strangers, and let them taste of our refectory. We are a poor order," he continued, with a sly smile, "but yet we live in a rich country, and the people are benevolent to us, so that our board is not ill supplied; and strangers who visit us always remember our poverty."

"That we will do most willingly," said Richard of Wood-

ville, "to the best of our ability, good father. But you see we have a lady with us. Now I have heard, that in some orders—"

"Ay, ay," replied the monk, laughing, "where the brotherhood are in sad doubt of their own virtue; but we are all grave and sober men, and fear not to see a fair sister amongst us—as a visitor, as a visitor, of course. It would be a want of Christian charity to send a fair lady from the gate, when she was in need of food and lodging. But come on, sir, if you will come; for we have still near a league to go, and 'tis well nigh the hour of supper, which this pious beast of mine knows right well. I had to drub him all the way to Aertrick, because he thought I had ought to be at vespers in the convent; and now he ambles me well nigh three leagues to the hour, because he knows that I ought to be back again. Oh, he has as much care of my conscience as a lady's father-director has of hers. Come, my son, if you be coming;" and therewith he put his ass once more into a quick pace, and took the road to the right.

In little more than half an hour the whole party stood before the gates of a large heavy building, inclosed within high walls, situated at a short distance from the town of Thorout; and the good monk, leaving his new friends without, went in to speak with the prior in regard to their reception. No great difficulty seemed to be made; and the prior himself, a white bearded, fresh complexioned old man, with a watery blue eye, well set in fat, came out to the door to welcome them. His air was benevolent; and his look, though somewhat more joyous than was perhaps quite in harmony with his vows, was by no means so unusual in his class as to call for any particular observation on the part of the young Englishman.

Far from displaying any scruples in regard to receiving Ella within those holy walls, he was the first to show himself busy, perhaps somewhat more than needful, in assisting her to dismount. It was evident that he was a great admirer of beauty in the other sex; but there were other objects for which he had an extreme regard; and one of those, in the form of the supper of the monastery, was already being placed upon the table of the refectory; so that there was no other course for him to pursue than to hasten the whole party in, to partake of the meal, only pausing to ask Richard of Woodville, with a glance at the black robe of serge and the white wimple of Ella Brune, whether she was a sister of some English order?

Woodville simply replied that she was not, but merely a young maiden who was placed under his charge, to escort safely to Peronne, or perhaps Dijon, if she did not find her relations, who were attached to the Court of Burgundy, at the former place.

The good prior was satisfied for the time, and led the way on to the refectory, where about twenty brethren were assembled, waiting with as eager looks for the commencement of the meal as if they had been fasting for at least four-and-twenty hours. To judge, however, from the viands to which they soon sat down, no such abstinence was usually practised; and capons, and roe-deer, and wild-boar pork, were in as great plenty on the table of the refectory as in the hall of a high English baron. Some distinction of rank, too, was here observed;* and the attendants of Richard of Woodville were left to sup with the servants of the convent, somewhat to their surprise and displeasure. The monks in general seemed a cheerful and well-contented race, fond of good cheer and rich wine; and all but one or two seemed to vie with each other in showing very courteous attention to poor Ella Brune, in which course the prior himself, and the brother questor, who had been Woodville's guide thither, particularly distinguished themselves.

There was one saturnine man, indeed, seated somewhat far down the table, with his head bent over his platter, who seemed to take little share in the hilarity of the others. From time to time he gave a side-long look towards Ella; but it was evidently not one of love or admiration; and Richard of Woodville was easily led to imagine that the good brother was somewhat scandalized at the presence of a woman in the convent. He asked the questor, who sat next to him, however, in a low voice, who that silent brother was; and it needed no farther explanation to make the monk understand whom he meant.

"He is a Kill-joy," replied the questor, with a significant look; "but he is none of our own people, though one of the order, from the abbey at Liege. He departs soon, God be praised; for he has done nothing but censure us since he came hither. His abbot sent him away upon a visitation—to get rid of him, I believe; for he was unruly there, too, and

* In many countries, the distinction of station, if not of birth, was very strictly enforced, especially at meals; and I think it is Meyrick who mentions the ordonnance of some foreign prince, by which no one was permitted, under the grade of chivalry, to sit at the table with a knight, unless he were a cross-bowman, the son of a knight.

declared that widgeons could not be eaten on even an ordinary fast-day without sin, though we all know the contrary."

"He is not orthodox in that, at least," answered Richard of Woodville, with a smile. "Doubtless he thinks it highly improper for a lady to have shelter here."

"For that very reason," said the questor, in the same low tone in which their conversation had been hitherto carried on, "the prior will have to lodge you in the visitor's lodging, which you saw just by the gate; for he fears the reports of brother Paul. Otherwise he would have put you in the sub-prior's rooms, he being absent. But see, now he has done himself, how brother Paul watches every mouthful that goes down the throats of others!" The questor sank his voice to a whisper, adding, in a solemn tone, "He drinks no wine—nothing but water wets his lips! Is not that a sin?—a disparaging of the gifts of God?"

"It is, certainly, not using them discreetly," answered Richard of Woodville; "and, methinks, in these low lands, a cup of generous wine, such as this is, must be even more necessary to a reverend monk, who spends half his time in prayer, than to a busy creature of the world, who has plenty of exercise to keep his blood flowing."

"To be sure it is!" replied the questor, who approved the doctrine highly; and thereupon he filled Woodville's can again, with a "Benedicite, noble sir."

When the meal was over, the young Englishman remarked, that this grim brother Paul, of whom they had been speaking, took advantage of the little interval which usually succeeds the pleasant occupation of eating, to draw the prior aside, and whisper to him for several minutes. The face of the latter betrayed impatience and displeasure, and he turned from him, with a somewhat mocking air, saying aloud, "You are mistaken, my brother, and not charitable, as you will soon see. Hark! there is the bell for complines. Do you attend the service, sir?"

The last words were addressed to Richard of Woodville, who bowed his head, and answered, "Gladly I will."

"Oh, yes!" cried Ella, with a joyful look; "I shall be so pleased, if I may find a place in the chapel. I have not had the opportunity of hearing any service since I left London."

"Assuredly, my daughter!" said the prior, with a gracious look; "the chapel is open to all. We have our own place; but every day we have the villagers and townsfolk to hear our chanting, which we are somewhat vain of. You shall be shown how to reach it with your friends."

The monks took their way to the chapel by a private door from the refectory; and Richard of Woodville, with Ella, was led by a lay brother of the monastery through the court. Two or three women and one old man were in the chapel, and the short evening service began and ended, the sweet voice of Ella Brune mingling sounds with the choir, which, well I wot, the place had not often heard before. At the close, Richard of Woodville moved towards the door; but Ella besought him to stay one moment, and, advancing to the shrine of Our Lady, knelt down and prayed devoutly, with her beads in her hand. Perhaps she might ask for a prosperous journey, and for deliverance from danger; or she might entreat support and guidance in an undertaking that occupied the dearest thoughts of an enthusiastic heart; nor will there be many found to blame her, even if the higher aspirations, the holier and purer impulses that separate the spirit from the earth and lead the soul to Heaven, were mingled with the mortal affections that cling around us to the end, so long as we are bondsmen of the clay.

While she yet prayed, and while the monks were wending away through their own particular entrance, the old prior advanced to Woodville, who was standing near the door, and remarked, "Our fair sister seems of a devout and Catholic spirit. These are bad days, and there are many that swerve from the true faith."

At these words a conviction, very near the truth, broke upon Woodville's mind, as he recollected what Ella had told him of the opinions of old Murdock Brune and of his relations in Liege, and combined her account with the whispering of brother Paul, a monk from that very city. It was a sudden flash of perception, rather than the light of cold consideration; and he replied, without a moment's pause, "She is, indeed, a sincere and pious child of the Holy Roman Catholic Church; and she has been much tried, as you would soon perceive, reverend sir, if you knew all; for she has relations who have long since abandoned the faith of their fathers, and would fain have persuaded her to adopt their own vain and heretical opinions; but she has been firm and constant, even to her own injury in their esteem, poor maiden!"

"Ay, I thought so, I thought so!" replied the fat prior, rubbing his fat white hands. "See how she prays to the Blessed Virgin; and the Queen of Heaven will hear her prayers. She always has especial grace for those who kneel at that altar. Good night, brother;—good night! The questor and the refectioner will show you your lodging, and

give you the sleeping cup. To-morrow I will see you ere you depart. God's blessing upon you, daughter," he added, as Ella approached. "I must away, for that father Paul has us all up to matins."

Thus saying, the old monk retired; and in the court Woodville found his friend the questor and another brother, who led him and his attendants to what was called the visitor's lodging, where, with a more comfortable bed than the night before, he slept soundly, only waking for a few moments as the matin bell rang, and then dropping asleep again, to waken shortly after daylight and prepare for his journey onward.

When he came to depart, however, there was one drawback to the remembrance of the pleasant evening he had passed in the monastery. A stout mule was saddled in the court, and the prior besought him, in courteous terms, to give the advantage of his escort to father Paul, who was about to set out likewise for Ghent. Richard of Woodville could not well refuse, though not particularly pleased, and placing a liberal return for his entertainment in the box of the convent, he began his journey, resolved to make the best of a companionship which he could not avoid.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

All was bustle in the good old town of Ghent, as Richard of Woodville and his train rode in. It was at all times a gay and busy place; and even now, when much of its commerce has passed away from it, what a cheerful and lively scene does its market-place present on a summer's day, with the tall houses rising round, and breaking the line of the sunshine into fantastic forms, and the innumerable groups of men and women standing to gossip or to traffic, or moving about in many-coloured raiment! On that day, however, military display was added to the usual gaiety of the scene, and to the ordinary municipal pageants of the time. Horsemen in arms were riding through the streets, lances were seen here and there, and pennons fluttered on the wind, while every now and then attendants in gay dresses, with the arms of Burgundy embroidered upon breast and back, passed along with busy looks and an important air.

The young Englishman took his way under the direction of brother Paul—who had shown himself upon the journey more courteous and conversable than had been expected—towards the principal hostelry of the place; and Ghent at that time possessed many; but he was twice forced to stop in his advance by the crowds, who seemed to take little notice of him and his train, so fully occupied were they with some other event of the day. The first interruption was caused by a long train of priests and monks going to some church, with all the splendid array of the Roman Catholic clergy, followed by an immense multitude of idle gazers; and hardly had they passed, when the procession of the trades, walking on foot, with banners displayed, and guards in armour, and ensigns of the different companies, crossed the path of the travellers, causing them to halt for a full quarter of an hour, while the long line moved slowly on.

"Is this any day of peculiar festival, brother Paul?" demanded Richard of Woodville; "the good citizens of Ghent seem in holiday."

"None that I know of," replied the monk; "but I will ask;" and, pushing on his mule to the side of one of the more respectable artisans, he inquired the cause of the procession of the trades.

"They are going to compliment the Count de Charolois," answered the man, "and to ask his recognition of their charters and privileges. He arrived only this morning."

"That is fortunate, Ella," said Woodville, as soon as he was informed of this reply; "both for you and for me. Your father's cousin will, most likely, be with him; and I seek the Count myself."

Brother Paul seemed to listen attentively to what his companions said; but he made no remark; and as soon as the procession had passed, they rode on, and were soon housed comfortably for the night. The monk left them at the inn door, thanking the young English gentleman for his escort, and retired to the abbey of St. Bavon.

The hour of the day was somewhat late for Richard of Woodville to present himself before the Count de Charolois, and he also judged that it might be more prudent to visit in the first place the agent of the King of England—the well-known diplomatist of that day, Sir Philip Morgan, or de Morgan—if it should chance that he had accompanied the Count to Ghent. That he had done so, indeed, seemed by no means improbable, as Woodville had learned since his arrival in Flanders, that the Duke of Burgundy himself was

absent in the French capital, and that the chief rule of his Flemish territory was entrusted to his son. The host of the inn, however, could tell him nothing about the matter; all he knew was, that the Count had arrived that morning unexpectedly, accompanied by a large train, and that instead of taking up his abode in the Cour des Princes, which had of late years become the residence of the Counts of Flanders, he had gone to what was called the Vieux Bourg, or old castle, of the Flemish princes. He offered to send a man to inquire if a person bearing the hard name which his English guest had pronounced, was with the Count's company; and Richard of Woodville had just got through the arrangements of a first arrival, and was taking a hasty meal, when the messenger returned, saying that Sir Philip de Morgan was with the Count, and was lodged in the left gate tower entering from the court.

"I will go to him at once, Ella," he said; "and before my return you had better bethink you of what course you will pursue, in case your kinsman should not be with the Count. I will leave you for the present under the charge of Ned Dyram here, who will see that no harm happens to you in this strange town."

"Oh! it is not strange to me," replied Ella Brune. "We once staid here for a month, noble sir; and, as to bethinking me of what I shall do, I have bethought me already, but will not stay you to speak about it now."

Thus saying, she suffered him to depart, without giving him any charge to inquire after her kinsman, being somewhat more than indifferent, to say the truth, as to whether Richard of Woodville found him or not. When the young gentleman had departed, and the meal was concluded, Ned Dyram, though he had taken care to show no great pleasure at the task which his master had given him to execute, besought his fair companion to walk forth with him into the town, and urged her still, notwithstanding the plea of weariness which she offered for retiring to her own chamber.

"I wish to purchase some goods," he said; "and shall never make myself understood, fair Ella, unless I have you with me."

"Oh! every one in this town speaks French," replied Ella Brune; "for since the country fell to one of the royal family of France, that tongue has become the fashion amongst the nobles; and the traders are obliged to learn it, to speak with them."

"But I must not go out and leave you," replied Ned

Dyram, "after the charge my young lord has laid upon me;" and as he still pressed her to accompany him, Ella, who felt that she owed him some gratitude for having forwarded her schemes so far, at length consented; and they issued forth together into the streets of Ghent.

As soon as they were free from the presence of the other attendants of Richard of Woodville, the manner of her companion towards Ella became very different. There was a tenderness in his tones, and in his words, an expression of admiration in his countenance, which he had carefully avoided displaying before others; and the poor girl felt somewhat grieved and annoyed, although, as there was nothing coarse or familiar in his demeanour, she felt that she had no right to be displeased.

"The lowliest may love the highest," she thought; "and in station he is better than I am. Why, then, should I feel angry?—And yet I wish this had not been; it may mar all my plans. How can I check it? and if I do, may he not divine all the rest, and, in his anger, do what he can to thwart me?—I will treat it lightly. Heaven pardon me, if I dissemble!"

"What are you thinking of so deeply, fair maiden?" asked Ned Dyram, marking the reverie into which she had fallen. "You do not seem to listen to what I say."

"As much as it is worth, Master Dyram," replied Ella, in a gay tone; "but I must check you; you are too rapid in your sweet speeches. Do you not know, that he who would become a true servant to a lady, must have long patience, and go discreetly to work? Oh! I am not to be won more easily than my betters! Poor as I am, I am as proud as any lady of high degree, and will have slow courtship and humble suit before I am won."

"You shall have all that you wish, fair Ella," answered Ned Dyram, "if you will but smile upon my suit!"

"Smile!" exclaimed Ella, with the same light manner. "Did ever man dream of such a thing so soon! Why, you may think yourself highly favoured, if you get a smile within three months. The first moon is all sighing—the next is all beseeching—the next, hoping and fearing; and then, perchance, a smile may come, to give hope encouragement. A kind word may follow at the end of the fourth month, and so on. But the lady who could be wholly won before three years, is unworthy of regard. However, Master Dyram," she continued in a graver tone, "you must make haste to

purchase what you want, for I am over-weary to walk further over these rough stones."

Just as she spoke, brother Paul passed them, in company with a secular priest; and, although he took no notice of his fellow travellers, walking on as if he did not see them, the quick eye of Ned Dyram perceived with a glance that the priest and the monk had stopped, and were gazing back, talking earnestly together.

"That dull shaveling loves us not, fair Ella," said Ned Dyram. "He is one of your haters of all men, I should think."

"I have seen his face somewhere before," answered Ella Brune; "but I know not well where. 'Tis not a pleasant picture to look upon, certainly, but he may be a good man for all that. Come, Master Dyram, what is it you want to buy? Here are stalls enough around us now; and if you do not choose speedily, I must turn back to the inn, and leave you to find your way through Ghent alone."

"Then, first," said Ned Dyram, "I would buy a clasp to fasten the hood round your fair face."

"What!" exclaimed Ella, in a tone of merry anger; "accept a present within a week of having seen you first! Nay, nay, servant of mine, that is a grace you must not expect for months to come. No, if that be all you want, I shall turn back," and she did so accordingly; but Ned Dyram had accomplished as much of his object as he had hoped or expected, for that day at least. He had spoken of love with Ella Brune; and, although what a great seer of the human heart has said, that "talking of love is not making it," may be true, yet it is undoubtedly a very great step to that pleasant consummation. But Ned Dyram had done more; he had overstepped the first great barrier; and Ella now knew that he loved her. He trusted to time and opportunity for the rest; and he was not one to doubt his skill in deriving the greatest advantage from both.

The foolish and obtuse are often deceived by others; the shrewd and quick are often deceived by themselves. Without that best of all qualities of the mind, strong common sense, there is little to choose between the two: for if the dull man has in the world to contend with a thousand knaves, the quick one has in his own heart to contend with a thousand passions; and, perhaps, the domestic cheats are the most dangerous after all. There is not so great a fool on the earth as a clever man, when he is one; and Ned Dyram was one of that class, so frequently to be found in all ages,

whose abilities are sometimes serviceable to others, but are rarely, if ever, found serviceable to themselves.

Ella had used but little art towards him, but that which all women use, or would use, under such circumstances. Her first great thought was to conceal the love she felt; and where—when it becomes necessary to do so—is there a woman who will not find a thousand disguises to hide it from all eyes? But to him especially she was anxious to suffer no feeling of her bosom to appear; for she had speedily discovered, by a sort of intuition rather than observation—or, perhaps by a quickness in the perception of small traits which often seems like intuition—that he was keen and cunning beyond his seeming; and now she had a double motive for burying every secret deep in her own heart. She laid out no plan, indeed, for her future conduct towards him; she thought not what she would say, or what she would do; and if, in her after course, she employed aught like wile against his wiles, it was done on the impulse of the moment, and not on any predetermined scheme.

Ned Dyram had remarked his master's conduct well since Ella had been their companion; he had seen that Woodville had been sincere in the opinion he had expressed, that it would be better for her to remain in England; and the very calm indifference which he had displayed on finding her in the ship with himself, had proved to him, both that there had never been any love passages between them ere he knew either, as he had imagined when first he was sent to London, and thus there was no chance of the young gentleman's kindly sympathy for the fair girl he protected growing into a warmer feeling. He read the unaffected conduct of his master aright; but to that of Ella Brune he had been more blind, partly because he was deceived by his own passions, partly because, in this instance, he had a much deeper and less legible book to read—a woman's heart; and, though naturally of a clear-sighted and even suspicious mind, he saw not, in the slightest degree, the real impulses on which she acted.

Contented, therefore, with the progress he had made, he purchased some articles of small value at one of the stalls which they passed, and returned to the inn with his fair companion, who at once sought her chamber, and retired to rest, without waiting for Richard of Woodville's return. Then sitting down in a dark corner of the hall, in which several of his companions were playing at tables, and two or three other guests listening to a tale in broad Flemish, delivered by the

host, Dyram turned in his mind all that had passed between him and Ella, and, with vanity to aid him, easily persuaded himself that his suit would find favour in her eyes. He saw, indeed, that the rash and licentious thoughts which he had at one time entertained in regard to her when he found her poor, solitary, and unprotected, at a hostel in the liberties of the city, were injurious to her; but as his character was one of those too ordinary and debased ones, which value all things by the difficulty of attainment, he felt the more eagerly inclined to seek her, and to take any means to make her his, because he found her less easy to be obtained than he had at first imagined.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE EXILE.

At one side of a small square or open space, in the town of Ghent, rose a large pile of very ancient architecture, called the Graevensteen, for many centuries the residence of the Counts of Flanders. Covering a wide extent of ground with its walls and towers, the building ran back almost to the banks of the Lièvc, over which a bridge was thrown, communicating with the castle on one side, and the suburbs on the other. In front, towards the square, and projecting far before the rest of the pile, was a massive castellated gate of stone, flanked by high towers, rising to a considerable height. The aspect of the whole was gloomy and stern; but the gay scene before the gates—the guards, the attendants, the pages in the bright-coloured and splendid costumes, particularly affected by the house of Burgundy—relieved the forbidding aspect of the dark portal, contrasting brilliantly, though strangely, with its sombre and prison-like air.

At a small light wicket, in a sort of balustrade, or screen, of richly sculptured stone, which separated the palace from the rest of the square, stood two or three persons, some of them in arms, others dressed in the garb of peace; and Richard of Woodville, with his guide, approaching one who seemed to be the porter, inquired if Sir Philip de Morgan could be spoken with?

"Pass in," was the brief reply:—"the door in the court, on the left of the gate;" and walking on, they took their way

under the deep arch, and found in one of the towers a small low door of massive oak, studded with huge bosses of iron. No one was in attendance; and this door being partially open, was pushed back by Richard of Woodville, who bade the guide wait below, while he mounted the narrow stairs, the foot of which was seen before him. At the first story another open door presented itself, displaying a little anteroom, with two or three servants seated round a table, playing at cross and pile, a game which, by this time, had descended from kings to lacqueys. Entering at once, the young gentleman, using the French tongue, demanded to speak with Sir Philip de Morgan; but the servants continued their game with that sort of cold indifference which Englishmen of an inferior class have, in all ages, been accustomed to show towards foreigners: one of them replying, in very bad French, and hardly lifting his head from the game, "He can't be spoken with—he is busy!" adding in English to his fellow, "Play on, Wilfred."

"How now, knave!" exclaimed Richard of Woodville in his own tongue; "Methinks you are saucy! Rise this moment, and inform your master that a gentleman from the King of England desires to speak with him."

The man instantly started up, replying, "I beg your pardon, sir. I did not know you. I thought it was some of those Flemish hogs, come to speak about the vellum."

"Learn to be civil to all men, sir," replied Richard of Woodville; "and that a serving man is as much below an honest trader as the trader is below his lord. Go and do as I have told you."

The lacquey retired by a door opposite, leaving a smile upon the faces of his fellows at the lecture he had received; and after being absent not more than a minute, he re-opened the door, saying, "Follow me, noble sir; Sir Philip will see you."

Passing through another small chamber, in which a pale thin man in a black robe, with a shaven crown, was sitting, busily copying some papers, Richard of Woodville was ushered into a larger room, poorly furnished. At a table in the midst, was seated a corpulent, middle-aged personage, with a countenance which at first sight seemed dull and heavy. The nose, the cheeks, the lips, were fat and protruding; and the thick shaggy eyebrows hung so far over the eyes, as almost to conceal them. The forehead, however, was large and fine, somewhat prominent just about the brow, and over the nose; and when the eye could be seen, though

small and grey, there was a bright and piercing light in it, which frequently accompanies high intellect. He was dressed in the plainest manner, and in dark colours, with a furred gown over his shoulders, and a small black velvet cap upon his head; nor would it have been easy for any one unacquainted with his real character to divine that in that coarse and somewhat repulsive form was to be found one of the greatest diplomatists of his age.

Sir Philip de Morgan rose as soon as Richard of Woodville entered, bowing his head with a courtly inclination, and desiring his visitor to be seated. As soon as the servant had closed the door, he began the conversation himself, saying, "My knave tells me, sir, you come from the King. It might have been more prudent not to say so."

"Why, good faith, Sir Philip," replied Woodville, "without saying so, there was but little chance of seeing you; for you have some saucy vermin here, who thought fit to pay but little attention to my first words; and moreover, as I have letters from the King for the Count de Charolois, which must be publicly delivered, concealment was of little use, and could last but a short time."

"That alters the case," answered Sir Philip de Morgan. "As to my knaves, they must be taught to use their eyes, though a little insolence is not altogether objectionable; but you mentioned letters for the Count—I presume you have some for me?"

"I have," answered Richard of Woodville, putting his hand into the gibecière, or pouch, which was slung over his right shoulder and under his left arm, by an embroidered band. "This, from the King, sir;" and he placed Henry's letter in the envoy's hand.

Sir Philip de Morgan took it, cut the silk with his dagger, and drew forth the two sheets which it contained. The first which he looked at was brief; and the second, which was folded and sealed, with two words written in the corner, he did not open, but laid aside.

"So, Master Woodville," he said, after this examination, "I find you have come to win your golden spurs in Burgundy. What lies in me to help you, I will do. To-morrow I will make you known to the Count de Charolois. I was well acquainted with your good father, and your lady mother, too. She was the sister, if I recollect, of the good knight of Dunbury, a very noble gentleman;" and then, turning from the subject, he proceeded, with quiet and seemingly unimportant questions, to gain all the knowledge that he

could from Richard of Woodville regarding the court of England, and the character, conduct, and popularity of the young King. But his visitor, as the reader may have seen in earlier parts of this true history, though frank and free in his own case, and where no deep interests were concerned, was cautious and on his guard in matters of greater moment. He was not sent thither to babble of the King's affairs; and though he truly represented his Sovereign as highly popular with all classes, and deservedly so, Sir Philip de Morgan gained little farther information from him on any of the many points, in regard to which the diplomatist would fain have penetrated the monarch's designs before he thought fit to communicate them.

The high terms in which Henry had been pleased to speak of the gentleman who bore his letter, naturally induced the envoy to set down his silence to discretion, rather than to want of knowledge; and he observed, after his inquiries had been parried more than once, "You are, I see, prudent and reserved in your intelligence, Master Woodville."

"It is easy to be so, fair sir," answered his visitor, "when one has nothing to communicate. Doubtless the King has told you all, without leaving any part of his will for me to expound. At least, if he did, he informed me not of it; and I have nothing more to relate."

"What! not one word of France?" asked the knight, with a smile.

"Not one!" replied Woodville, calmly.

The envoy smiled again. "Well," he said, "then to-morrow, at noon, I will go with you to the Count, if you will be here. Doubtless we shall hear more of your errand, from the letters you bear to that noble prince."

"I do not know," replied Woodville, rising; "but at the same time, I would ask you to send some one with me to find out the dwelling of one Sir John Grey, if he be now in Ghent."

"Sir John Grey!" said de Morgan, musing, as if he had never heard the name before. "I really cannot tell you where to find such a person: there is none of that name here. Is he a friend of your own?"

"No!" answered Richard of Woodville; "I never saw him."

"Then you have letters for him, I presume," rejoined the other. "What says the superscription? Does it not give you more clearly his place of abode? This town contains many a street and lane. I have only been here these eight

hours since several years; and he may well be in the place and I not know it."

Woodville drew forth the King's letter, and gazed at the writing on the back; while Sir Philip de Morgan, who had risen likewise, took a silent step round, and glanced over his arm. "Ha! the King's own writing," he said. "Sir John Grey! I remember; there is, I believe, an old countryman of ours, living near what is called the Sas de Gand, of the name of Mortimer. He has been here some years; and if there be a man in Ghent who can tell you where to find this Sir John Grey, 'tis he. Nay, I think you may well trust the letter in his hands to deliver. Stay, I will send one of my knaves with you, who knows the language and the manners of this people well."

"I thank you, noble sir," replied his visitor; "but I have a man waiting for me, who will conduct me, if you will but repeat the direction that you gave—near the Sas de Gand, I think you said?"

"Just so," replied Sir Philip de Morgan, drily; "but not quite so far. It is a house called the house of Waeerschoot; —but it is growing late; in less than an hour it will be dark. You had better delay your visit till to-morrow, when you will be more sure of admission; for he is of a moody and somewhat strange fantasy, and not always to be seen."

"I will try, at all events, to-night," replied Richard of Woodville. "I can but go back tomorrow, if I fail. Farewell, Sir Philip, I will be with you at noon;"—and, after all the somewhat formal courtesies and leave-takings of the day, he retired from the chamber of the King's envoy, and sought the guide who had conducted him thither.

The man was soon found, talking to one of the inferior attendants of the Count of Charolois; and, calling him away, Richard of Woodville directed him to lead to the house which Sir Philip de Morgan had indicated. The guide replied, in a somewhat dissatisfied tone, that it was a long way off; but a word about his reward soon quickened his movements; and issuing through the gates of the city, they followed a lane through the suburbs on the northern side of the Lys.

A number of fine houses were built at that time beyond the actual walls of Ghent; for the frequent commotions which took place in the town, and the little ceremony with which the citizens were accustomed to take the life of any one against whom popular wrath had been excited, rendered it expedient in the eyes of many of the nobles of Flanders to lodge beyond the dangerous fortifications, which were as

often used to keep in an enemy as to keep one out. Many of these were modern buildings; but others were of a far more ancient date; and at length, as it was growing dusk, the young Englishman's guide stopped at the gate of one of the oldest houses they had yet seen, and struck two or three hard blows upon the large heavy door. For some time nothing but a hollow sound made answer; and looking up, Richard of Woodville examined the mansion, which seemed going fast into a state of decay. It had once been one of the strong battlemented dwellings of some feudal lord; and heavy towers, and numberless turrets, seemed to show that the date of its first erection went back to a time when the city of Ghent, confined to its own walls, had left the houses which were built beyond them surrounded only by the uncultivated fields and pastures, watered by the Scheld, the Lys, and the Lièvc. The walls still remained solid, though the sharp cutting of the round arches had mouldered away in the damp atmosphere; and the casements above—for externally there were none on the lower story—were, in many instances, destitute of even the small lozenges of glass, which, in those days, were all that even princely mansions could boast.

After waiting more than a reasonable time, the guide knocked loud again, and, looking round for a bell, at length found a rope hanging under the arch, which he pulled violently. While it was still in his hand, a stout Flemish wench appeared, and demanded what they wanted, that they made so much noise? Her words, indeed, were unintelligible to the young Englishman; but, guessing their import, he directed the guide to inquire if an Englishman, of the name of Mortimer, lived there? A nod of the head, which accompanied her reply, showed him that it was in the affirmative; and he then, by the same intervention, told her to let her master know, that a gentleman from England wished to see him.

The girl laughed, and shook her head, saying something which, when it came to be translated, proved to be, that she knew he would not see any one of the kind; but, though it was of no use, she would go and inquire; and away she consequently ran with good-humoured speed, showing, as she went, a pair of fat, white legs, with no other covering than that with which nature had furnished them.

She returned in a minute, with a look of surprise; and bade the strangers follow her, which they did, into the court. There, however, Woodville again directed his guide to wait, and, under the pilotage of the Flemish maid, entered upon a sea of passages, till at length, catching him familiarly by the

hand to guide him in the darkness that reigned within, she led him to a flight of stairs, and opened a door at the top. Before him lay a small room, ornamented with richly carved oak, the lines and angles of which caught faintly the light proceeding from a lamp upon the table; and, standing in the midst of the room, with a look of eager impatience, was a man, somewhat advanced in life, though younger than Woodville had expected to see. His hair, it is true, was white, and his beard, which he wore long, was nearly so likewise; but he was upright, and seemingly firm in limb and muscle.* His face had furrows on it, too; but they seemed more those of care and thought than age; and his eye was clear, undimmed, and flashing.

"Well, sir! well!" he said in English, as soon as Richard of Woodville entered; "What news?—Why has she not come herself?"

"You are, I fear, under a mistake," replied the young Englishman. "I came to you for information—not to give any."

The other cast himself back into his seat, and covered his eyes with his hands, as Woodville spoke. The next moment he withdrew his hands, and the whole expression of his countenance was altered. Nothing appeared but a look of dull and thoughtful reserve, with a slight touch of disappointment.

As he spoke not, Richard of Woodville went on to say, "Sir Philip de Morgan directed me, sir—"

"Ay!—he has his eye ever upon me," exclaimed the other, interrupting him. "What does he seek—what is there now to blame?"

"Nothing, that I am aware of," answered Woodville; "it is on my own business he directed me here; not on yours or his."

"Indeed!" said the other, with a softened look. "And what is there for your pleasure, sir?"

"He informed me," replied his visitor, "that if there be a man in Ghent, it is yourself, who can tell me where to find one Sir John Grey, an English knight, supposed to be resident here."

"And may I ask your business with him?" inquired Mortimer, coldly.

* His after advancement to the Earldom of Tankerville was won by deeds of arms, which shows that he must have been still hale and robust at this time.

"Nay," answered Woodville; "that will be communicated to himself. I cannot see how it would stead you, to know aught concerning it."

"No!" replied Mortimer; "but it might stead him. A good friend, sir, to a man in danger, may stand like a barbican, as it were, before a fortress, encountering the first attack of the enemy. I say not that I know where Sir John Grey is to be found; but I do say, and at once, that I would not tell, if I did, till I had heard the motive of him who seeks him. He has been a wronged and persecuted man, sir; and it is fit that no indiscretion should lay him open to further injury."

Woodville fixed his eyes intently upon his companion's countenance; and, after a moment's pause, he said, in an assured tone, "I speak to Sir John Grey even now. Concealment is vain, sir, and needless; for I do but bring you a letter from the young King of England, which I promised to deliver with all speed; and if things be as I think, it will not prove so ungrateful to you as you may expect. Am I not right?—for I must have your own admission ere I give the letter."

"The letter!" repeated the other; and again a look of eagerness came over his countenance. "You bear a letter, then? You are keen, young man," he added; "but yet you look honest."

"I do assure you, sir," replied Woodville, "that I have no end or object on earth, but to give the letter with which I am charged to Sir John Grey himself. I am anxious, moreover, to do it speedily, for so I was directed; and I have therefore come to-night, without waiting for repose. If you be he, as I do believe, you may tell me so in safety, and rest upon the honour of an English gentleman."

"Honour!" said his companion, with a sad and bitter shake of the head. "I have no cause to trust in honour: it has become but a mere name, the meaning of which has been lost long ago, and each man interprets it as he likes best. In former times, honour was a thing as immutable as the diamond, which nought could change to any other form. 'Twas truth,—'twas right,—'twas the pure gold of the high heart. Now, alas! men have devised alloy; and the metal, be it as base as copper, passes current for the value that is stamped upon it by society. Honour is no longer independent of man's will; 'tis that which people call it, and no more. The liar, who, with a smooth face, wrongs his friend in the most tender point, is still a man of honour with the world: the traitor, who betrays his country or his king, so that it be

for passion, and not gold, is still a man of honour, and will cut your throat if you deny it: the calumniator, who blasts another's reputation with a sneer, is still a man of honour if he's brave. Honour's a name that changes colour, like the Indian beast, according to the light it is viewed in. Now it is courage; now it is rank; now it is riches; now it is fine raiment, or a swaggering air. Once it was Truth, young sir."

"And is ever so, in reality," replied Richard of Woodville; "the rest are all counterfeits, which only pass with men who know no better. It is of this honour that I speak, sir. However, as you know me not, I cannot expect you to attribute to me qualities that are indeed now rare; yet, holding myself bound by that very honour which we speak of, to deliver the letter that I bear to no one but him for whom it was destined, unless you tell me you are indeed that person, I must carry it back with me."

"Stay!—what is your name?" demanded the other—"that may give me light."

"My name is Richard of Woodville," answered his visitor.

"Ha! Richard of Woodville!" cried the stranger, with a look of joy, grasping his hand warmly. "Give it me—give it me—quick! I am Sir John Grey. How fares she?—where is she?—why did she not come?"

"I know not of whom you speak," replied Woodville; "this letter is from the King;" and, drawing it forth, he put it into his companion's hand.

"From the King!" exclaimed Sir John Grey—"from the King!—a letter to me!"—and he held the packet to the lamp, and gazed on the superscription attentively. "True, indeed?" he said at length, cutting the silk. "'Our trusty and well-beloved!'—a style I have not heard for years;" and bending his head over it, he perused the contents, which were somewhat long.

Woodville gazed at his face while he read, and marked the light and shade of many varied emotions come across it. Now, the eye strained eagerly at the first lines, and the brow knit; now, a proud smile curled the lip; and now, the eyelids showed a tear. But presently, as he proceeded, all haughtiness passed away from his look—he raised his eyes to heaven, as if in thankfulness; and at the end let fall the paper on the table, and clasped his hands together, exclaiming, "Praise to thy name, Most Merciful! The dark hour has come to an end!"

Then stretching forth his open arms to Richard of Woodville, he said, "Let me take you to my heart, messenger of joy!—you have brought me life!"

"I am overjoyed to be that messenger, Sir John," replied Woodville; "but, in truth, I was ignorant of what I carried. I did but guess, indeed, from my knowledge of the King's great soul, that he would not be so eager that this should reach you soon, if the tidings it contained were evil."

"They are home to the exile," replied the knight; "wealth to the beggar; grace and station to the disgraced and fallen; the reversal of all his father's bitter acts; the generous outpouring of a true royal heart! Noble, noble prince! God requite me with misery eternal, if I do not devote every moment that remains of this short life to do you signal service. And you, too, my friend," he continued, taking his visitor's hand—"so you are the man who, choosing by the heart alone, setting rank, and wealth, and name aside, looking but to loveliness and worth, sought the hand of a poor and portionless girl—the daughter of a proscribed and banished fugitive?"

"Good faith, Sir John!" replied the young gentleman, gazing upon him with a look of no small surprise and pleasure, "I begin to see light; but I have been so long in darkness that my eyes are dazzled. Can it be that I see my fair Mary's father—the father of Mary Markham—in Sir John Grey?"

But the knight's attention had been turned back to the letter, with that abrupt transition which the mind is subject to, when suddenly moved by joy so unexpected as almost to be rendered doubtful by its very intensity. "I cannot believe it," he said; "yet, who should deceive me? It is royal, too, in every word."

"It is the King's own hand that wrote it," replied Richard of Woodville; "and if there be aught that is high and generous therein—aught that speaks a soul above the ordinary crowd—aught that is marked as fitting for a King, who values royalty but for extended power to do good and redress wrong—set it down with full assurance as a proof that it is Henry's own! But you have not answered me as to that dear lady."

"She is my child, Richard," said Sir John Grey; "and if you are worthy, as I believe you, she shall be your wife. You chose her in lowliness and poverty; she shall be yours in wealth and honour. But tell me more about her. When did you see her? Why has she not come?"

"The last question I cannot answer," replied Richard of Woodville; "for, though I heard her father had sent for her, I knew not who that father was, or where; but ——"

"So, then, she never told you?" asked the knight.

"Never," answered Woodville, "nor my good uncle either; but I saw her some eight or nine days since in Westminster, well and happy. I have heard since, however, by a servant whom I sent up, that she and Sir Philip had returned in haste to Dunbury, upon some sudden news."

"Ay!—so then they have missed the men I sent," replied Sir John Grey. "I despatched a servant—the only one I had—three weeks since, together with some merchants, who were going to trade in London, and who promised on their return, which was to be without delay, to bring her with them."

"Stay!" exclaimed Woodville. "Had they not a freight of velvets and stuffs of gold?"

"The same," answered the knight. "What of them?"

"They were taken by pirates in the mouth of the Thames," replied Richard of Woodville. "I heard the news in Winchester, when I was purchasing housings for my horses. But be not alarmed for your dear child. She is safe. I saw her afterwards; and good Sir Philip seemed to marvel much, why some persons whom he expected had not yet arrived. Had he told me more, I could have given him tidings of them; put your mind at ease on her account, for she is still with Sir Philip."

"But that poor fellow, the servant!" answered the knight, sadly; "my heart is ill at rest for him. Misfortune teaches us to value things more justly than prosperity. A true and faithful friend, whatever be his station, is a treasure indeed, not to be lost without a bitter pang. I must thank God that my dear child is safe; yet I cannot forget him."

"They will put him to ransom with the rest," replied Richard of Woodville. "I heard they had carried the merchants and their vessel to some port in the north, and doubtless you will soon hear of him. I did not learn that there was any violence committed; for, though they are usually hard and cruel men, they are even more avaricious than bloodthirsty."

"God send it!" exclaimed Sir John Grey. "I wonder that your noble kinsman, when he heard that you were about to cross the sea, did not charge you with Mary's guidance hither. It would have been more safe."

"But you forget," replied Woodville, "that I was ignorant

of all concerning her. I thought she was an orphan till within the last ten days—or, perhaps, not so well placed as that. Besides, my uncle would not countenance our love; and, indeed, that was his reason; for I remember he said, that he wished we had not been such fools as to be caught by one another's eyes; that it would have saved him much embarrassment."

Sir John Grey smiled, saying—"That is so much the man I left. He had even then outlived the memory of his own young days, when lady's love was all his thought but arms, and looked upon everything, but that lofty and more shadowy devotion to the fair, which was the soul of olden chivalry, as little better than youthful idleness. He kept you, then, even to the last, without knowledge of her fate and history? He did well, too, for so I wished it; but I will now tell you all; and there is not, indeed, much to say. I raised my lance, with the rest, for my sovereign, King Richard; was taken and pardoned; but swore no allegiance to one whom I could not but hold as an usurper. When occasion served again, I was not slack to do the same once more, and, with my friends, fought the lost battle of Shrewsbury. My life was saved by a poor faithful fellow of our army, who gave his own, I fear, for mine; and flying, more fortunately than others, I escaped to this land. Here I soon heard that I was proclaimed a traitor, my estate seized, my name attainted, and my child sought for to make her a ward of the crown, and to give her and the fortune which her mother inherited, to some minion of the court. She was then a mere child, and, by your uncle's kindly care, was taken first to Wales, and thence brought to his own house, where he has ever treated her as a daughter. I lingered on in this and other lands from year to year; and many an effort was made to entrap or drive me back into the net. The King of France was instigated to expel me from his dominions; the Duke of Burgundy was moved to follow his example, but would not so debase himself to any king on earth. But why should I tell all that I have suffered? Every art was used, and every means of persecution tried, till at length, taking refuge in this town of Ghent, under a false name, I have known a short period of tranquillity. Then came the thought of my child upon me: it grew like a thirst, till I could bear no more, and I sent for her. I knew not then that the late King was dead, or I might have waited to see the result; for often, when this Prince was but a child, I have had him on my knee; and I too taught him to handle the bow when he

was seven years old; for, till his father stretched a hand towards the crown, he was my friend; and Harry of Hereford and John Grey were sworn brothers."

"The more the friendship once, the more the hate," replied Richard of Woodville; "so says an old song, noble knight; but now, that enmity is over, I trust, for ever. The Earl of March, the only well-founded obstacle in the way of Henry's rights, acknowledges them fully."

"And if he did not," answered Sir John Grey, with a stern brow, "I would never draw my sword for him. The Earl of March—I mean the old Earl—by tame acquiescence in the deeds of Henry of Bolinbroke, set aside his title. He held out no hand to help his falling kinsman Richard; and if the crown was to be given away, it was the Peers and Commons of England had the right to give it; and they rightly gave it to the brave and wise, rather than to the feeble and the timid. It was Richard Plantagenet was my King, and not the Earl of March. To the one I swore allegiance, and owed much; to the other I had no duty, and owed nothing. I did not wrangle which son of a king should succeed, but I upheld the monarch who was upon the throne. Neither did I ever, my young friend, regard the Duke of Lancaster with private enmity, as you seem to think. He was ambitious; he usurped his cousin's throne; and I drew the sword against him because he did so; but I will acknowledge that, if there was one man in England fitted to fill that throne with dignity, he was the man. He, on the contrary, hated me, because his own conduct had changed a friend into an enemy; and so it is ever in this world. But who is it rings the bell so fiercely? Hark! perhaps it is my child!"—and, opening the door, he turned his head eagerly to listen to the sounds that rose from below.

Richard of Woodville also gave ear, for a word is sufficient to make hopes, however improbable, rise up like young plants in a spring shower—at least, in our early days. But the next moment, the steps of two persons sounded in the passage, and one of the servants, whom Woodville had seen in the ante-chamber of Sir Philip de Morgan, appeared, guided by the Flemish maid.

"My master greets you well, sir," he said, addressing Sir John Grey, "and has sent you, by the King's order, some of the money belonging to you, for your present need;" and thus saying, he laid a heavy bag of what appeared to be coin upon the table. "He bids me say," continued the

man, "that the rest of the money will arrive soon, and that you had better appear at the Court of my Lord Count, as early as may be, that all the world may know you have the King's protection."

Sir John Grey gazed at the bag of money with a mournful smile. "How ready men are," he said, "when fortune favours! How far and how long might I have sought this, when I was in distress!"—and untying the bag, he took out a large piece of silver, saying to the servant, "There, my friend, is largess. Tell your master I will follow counsel. He has heard of this, Richard;—you bore him letters, I suppose;" he added, as the man quitted the room, with thanks for his bounty. "Well, 'tis no use to expect of men more than they judge their duty; yet this knight was the instrument who willingly urged the Duke of Burgundy to drive me forth from Dijon."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COUNT OF CHAROLOIS.

Clothed in the most splendid array with which he had been able to provide himself, his tight-fitting hose displaying to the highest advantage his graceful yet powerful limbs, with the coat of black silk, spotted with flowers of gold, cut wide, but gathered into numerous pleats or folds round the collar and the waist, and confined by a rich girdle to the form, while the sleeves, fashioned to the shape of the arm, and fastened at the wrist, showed the strong contour of the swelling muscles, Richard of Woodville stood before the door of the inn, as handsome and princely a man in his appearance as ever graced a royal court. Over his shoulders he wore a short mantle of embroidered cloth, trimmed with costly fur, the sleeves of which, according to the custom of the day, were slashed down the inner side so as to suffer the arm to be thrust out from them, while they, more for ornament than use, hung down to the bend of the knee. On his feet he wore the riding boots of the time, thrust down to the ankle; and—in accordance with a custom then new in the courts of France and Burgundy, but which ere long found its way to England—his heavy sword had been laid aside, and his only arm was a rich hilted dagger,

suspended by a gold ring from the clasp of his girdle. His head was covered with a small bonnet, or velvet cap, ornamented by a single long white feather, showing that he had not yet reached knightly rank; and round it curled in large masses his glossy dark-brown hair.

Likewise, arrayed with all the splendour that the young gentleman's purse had permitted him to procure, six of his servants stood ready by their horses' sides to accompany him to the dwelling of the Count of Charolois; and a glittering train they formed, well fitted to do honour to Old England in the eyes of a foreign court. It was evident enough that they were all well pleased with themselves; but their self-satisfaction was of the cool and haughty kind, so common to our countrymen, partaking more of pride than vanity. They looked down upon others more than they admired themselves; and, unlike the French or the Burgundians, seemed to care little what others thought of them,—quite contented with feeling that their garb became them, and that, should need be, they could give a stroke or bide a buffet with the best.

The horse of Richard of Woodville—not the one which had borne him from the coast, but a finer and more powerful animal—was brought round; and turning for a moment to Ella Brune, who stood with a number of other gazers at the door of the inn, the young Englishman said, "I will not be so careless and forgetful to day, Ella; but will bring you back tidings of your kinsman, without farther fault."

Then springing on his charger's back he rode lightly away, while the poor girl gazed after him, with a deep sigh struggling at her heart, and suppressed with pain, as she thought of the many eyes around her.

At the gate of the Graevensteen, orders had been already given to admit the young Englishman into the inner court; and, riding on, Richard of Woodville dismounted near the door which led to the apartments of Sir Philip de Morgan. A man who was waiting at the foot of the stairs, ran up them as soon as he saw the train, and before Woodville could follow, the envoy of the King of England came down, followed by a page. He greeted his young countryman with even marked courtesy, suffered his eye to rest with evident pleasure upon his goodly train, and then turning with a smile to Woodville, he inquired,—"Do men now in England gild the bits and chains of their horses?"

"It is a new custom, I believe," replied the young gentleman. "I gave little heed to it, but told the people to give

me those things that would not discredit my race and country at the Court of Burgundy."

"Well, let us go thither," replied Sir Philip; "or, at least, to such part of it as is here in Ghent. I have already advised the Count that you are coming, and he is willing to show you all favour."

The envoy accordingly led the way across the wide court which separated the old gate, with its gloomy towers, from the stern and still more forbidding fortress of the ancient Counts of Flanders; and passing first through a narrow chamber, in which were sitting some half dozen armed guards, and then through a wide hall, where a greater number of gentlemen were assembled in their garb of peace, the two Englishmen approached a flight of steps at the farther end. There a middle-aged man, with a gold chain round his neck, advanced, and addressing Sir Philip de Morgan, inquired if the Count was aware of their visit?

The diplomatist replied that they were expected at that hour; and the other, pushing open the door at the top of the steps, called loudly to an attendant within, to usher the visitors to his Lord's presence. After a few more ceremonies of the same kind, Woodville and his companion were introduced into the small cabinet in which the Count of Charolois was seated. He was not alone, for two personages, having the appearance of men of some rank, but booted and spurred as if for a journey, were standing before him, in the act of taking their leave; and Richard of Woodville had an opportunity of examining briefly the countenance of the Prince, known afterwards as Philip the Good.

He was then in the brightness of early youth; and seldom has there been seen a face more indebted to expression for the beauty which all men agreed to admire. Taken separately, perhaps none of the features were actually fine, except the eyes; but there was a look of generous kindness, a softness brightened by a quick and intelligent glance, a benignity rather heightened than diminished by certain firmness of character, in the mouth and jaw, which was inexpressibly pleasing to the eye. There were lines of deep thought, too, about the brow, which contrasted strangely with the smooth soft skin of youth, and with the rounded cheeks without a furrow or hollow, and the eyelids as unwrinkled and full as those of careless infancy.

The Count had evidently been speaking on matters of grave moment; for there was a seriousness even in his smile, as, rising for an instant, while the others bowed and

retired, he wished them a prosperous journey. He was above the middle height, but not very tall; and, though in after years he became somewhat corpulent, he was now very slight in form, and graceful in his movements, which all displayed, even at the early age of seventeen, that dignity, never lost, even after the symmetry of youth was gone.

As the two gentlemen who took their leave were quitting the room, the Count turned to Sir Philip de Morgan, bowing rather stiffly, and noticing Woodville with a slight inclination of the head.

"This is, I suppose, the gentleman you mentioned, Sir Philip," he said, "who has brought me letters from my royal cousin of England?"

"The same, fair sir," replied the envoy. "Allow me to make known to you Master Richard of Woodville, allied to the noble family of Beauchamp, one of the first in our poor island."

"He is welcome to Ghent," replied the Count. But Woodville remarked that he did not demand the letters which he bore; and he was hesitating whether he should present the one addressed to him, when the Prince inquired in an easy tone, whether he had had a prosperous journey; following up the question with so many others of small importance, that the young Englishman judged there was something assumed in his eager but insignificant interrogatory.

He knew not, indeed, what was the motive; but his companion, too well accustomed to the ways of courts not to translate correctly a hint of the kind, whether he chose to apply it or not, took occasion, at the very first pause, to say, "Having now had the honour of introducing this young gentleman, I will leave him with you, my Lord Count, as I have important letters to write on the subject of our conversation this morning."

"Do so, sir knight," replied the Prince; and he took a step towards the door, as if to honour his departing visitor.

"Now, Master Richard of Woodville," he continued, as soon as the other was gone, "let us speak of your journey hither; but first, if you please, let me see the letter which you bring, and which may, perhaps, render farther explanation unnecessary."

Richard of Woodville immediately presented the King's epistle to the Count of Charolois, who read the contents with attention, and then gazed at the bearer with an earnest glance. "I have heard of you before, sir," he said, with a gracious smile, "and am most willing to retain you on the

part of Burgundy. Such a letter as this from my royal cousin could not be written in favour of one who did not merit high honour; and, unhappily, in these days, there are but too many occasions of gaining renown in arms. May I ask what payment you require for the services of yourself and your men?"

"None, noble Prince," replied Richard of Woodville: "I come but to seek honour. If my services be good, you or your father will recompence them as you think meet. In the meantime, all that I require is entertainment for myself and followers at the Court of Burgundy, wherever it may be, and the discharge of my actual expenses in time of war, or when I am employed in any enterprise you may think fit to intrust to me."

"I see, sir, that you are of the olden chivalry," said the Count, giving him his hand. "You are from this moment a retainer of our house; and I am glad," he continued, "that I have spoken with you alone; for good Sir Philip de Morgan loves none to bring letters from his King but himself. I may have cause to call upon you soon. Even now, indeed, ——; but of that hereafter. How many have you with you?"

"Ten stout archers," answered the young Englishman, "who will do their duty in whatever field they may be called to, and myself. That is my only force, but it may go far; for we are well horsed and armed, and most of us have seen blood drawn in our own land. You said, my Lord Count, that even now an occasion might offer—at least, so I understood you. Now, I am somewhat impatient of fortune's tardiness, and would not miss her favours, as soon as her hand is open."

The Count mused for a moment, and then looked up, laughing. "Well," he said, "perhaps my mother may call me a rash boy, in trusting to such new acquaintance; but yet I will confide in you to justify me. There may be an occasion very soon; and if there be, I will let you have your part. I, alas! must not go; but, at all events, have everything ready to set out at a moment's notice; and you may chance to ride far before many days be over. Now let us speak of other things:" and he proceeded to ask his visitor numerous questions regarding the English court—its habits, customs, and the characters of the principal nobles that distinguished it.

Richard of Woodville answered his inquiries more frankly than he had done those of Sir Philip de Morgan, and the

Count seemed well pleased with all he heard. Gradually their conversation lost the stiffness of first acquaintance; and the young Prince, throwing off the restraint of ceremony, gave way to the candid spirit of youth, spoke of his own father, and of his dangerous position at the Court of France, expressed his longing desire to take an active part in the busy deeds that were doing, touched with some bitterness upon the conduct of the Dauphin towards his sister, and added, with a flushed cheek, "Would my father suffer it, I would force him, lance to lance, if not to cast away his painted paramour, at least to do justice to his neglected wife. She is more fair and bright than any French harlot; and it must be a studied purpose to insult her race, that makes him treat her thus."

"Perhaps not, noble Count," replied Richard of Woodville: "there is nothing so capricious on this earth as the pampered heart of greatness. Do we not daily see men of all ranks cast away from them things of real value to please the moment with some empty trifle? and the spoilt children of fortune—I mean Princes and Kings—may well be supposed to do the same. God, when he puts a crown upon their heads, leaves them to enrich it with jewels, if they will; but, alas! too often they content themselves with meaner things, and think the crown enough."

The Prince smiled, with a thoughtful look, and gazed for a moment in Woodville's face, ere he replied. "You speak not the same language as Sir Philip de Morgan," he said at length: "his talk is ever of insult and injury to the House of Burgundy. He can find no excuse for the House of Valois."

"He speaks as a politician, my Lord Count," replied Woodville: "would that I might say, I speak as a friend, though a bold one. I know not what are his views and purposes; but when you mention aught to me, I must answer frankly, if I answer at all; and in this case I can easily believe that the Dauphin, in the wild heat of youth, perhaps nurtured in vice and licentiousness, and, at all events, taught early to think that his will must have no control, may neglect a sweet lady for a trumpery leman, without meaning any insult to your noble race. Bad as such conduct is, it were needless to aggravate it by imaginary wrongs."

The Count looked down in thought, and then, raising his head with a warm smile, he answered, "You speak nobly, sir, and you may say you are my friend; for the man who would temper a Prince's passion, without any private motive,

is well worthy of the character here written;" and he laid his hand upon Henry's letter, which he had placed on the table.

"I trust, my Lord Count," replied Woodville, "that you will never have cause to say, in any case where my allegiance to my own Sovereign is not concerned, that I do not espouse your real interests, as warmly as I would oppose any passion, even of your own, which I thought contrary to them. I am not a courtier, fair sir, and may express myself somewhat rudely; but I will trust to your own discernment to judge, in all instances, of the motive rather than the manner."

"I shall remember more of what you have said than you perhaps imagine," answered the young Count. "You gave me a lesson, my noble friend—and henceforth I will call you by that name—in regard to those spoilt children of fortune, as you term them, Princes; and I will try not to let a high station pamper me into deeds like those which I myself condemn. But there are many persons here, in the good town of Ghent, to whom I must make you known, as they will be your companions for the future; and, before night, such arrangements shall be made for your lodging and accommodation as will permit of your taking up your abode in the old castle here. There is but one warning I will give you," he continued: "Sir Philip de Morgan is a shrewd and clever man—very zealous in the cause of his King, but somewhat jealous of all other influence. My father esteems him highly, though he is not always ready to follow whither he would lead. You had better be his friend than his enemy; and yet, when there is anything to be done, communicate with me direct, and not through him."

"I will follow your advice, sir, as far as may be," replied Woodville; "but I do not think there is any great chance of Sir Philip de Morgan and myself interfering with each other. I am a soldier; he is a statesman. I will not meddle with his trade, and I think he is not likely to envy me mine. He was a good man at arms, I hear, in his early days; but I fancy he will not easily inclose himself in plate again."

"Good faith," exclaimed the young Count, laughing, "his cuirass would need be shaped like a bow, and have as much iron about it as the great bombard of Oudenarde, which our good folks of Ghent call Mad Meg.* No, no! I do not think

* Dulle Grite.—This great cannon, or bombard, was forged for the siege of Oudenarde, in 1382, and is nearly twenty feet long, and about eleven in circumference.

that he will ever couch a lance again. But come, my friend, let us to the hall, where we shall find some of the nobles of Burgundy and Flanders waiting for us. Then we will ride to my mother's, where I will make you known to her fair ladies. I have no further business for the day; but yet I must not be absent from my post, as every hour I expect tidings which may require a sudden resolution."

The Prince then led the way into the large hall, through which Richard of Woodville had passed about half an hour before; and there, was instantly surrounded by a number of gentlemen, to whom he introduced his new retainer. Many a noble name, which the young Englishman had often heard of, was mentioned;—Croys, Van Heydes, St. Paul's and Royes, Lalains, and Lignes; and from all, as might be expected, under the circumstances in which he was introduced to them, he received a courteous reception. It must not be denied, however, that although chivalrous customs required a friendly welcome to every adventurous gentleman seeking service at a foreign court, human nature, the same in all ages, left room for jealousy of any one who might aspire to share the favour which each desired to monopolize. Thus, though every one was, as I have said, courteous in demeanour to Richard of Woodville, it was all cold and formal; and many a whispered observation on his appearance and manners, on the accent in which he spoke the language, and on the slight difference of his dress from that of the Burgundian court, marked a willingness to find fault wherever it was possible. For his part, he took little notice of these things, well knowing what he had to expect; and aware that friendship could not be gained at once, he treated all with perfect good humour and civility, in the hope that those who were worthy of any farther consideration would learn in time to esteem him, and to cast away any needless jealousy.

After passing about half an hour in the hall, the young Count selected some five or six of the gentlemen present to accompany him on his visit to his mother, who was lodged in the new palace, called the Cour des Princes; and, as soon as his horses were brought round, he descended, with the young Englishman and the rest, into the court of the castle. He paused for a moment, where, ranged in a line by their horses' sides, he saw the stout yeomen who had accompanied Richard of Woodville thither; and as, with an eye not unskilful even then in judging of thewes and sinews, he marked their light, yet powerful limbs, with an approving smile, he

turned to his new friend, saying, in a low voice, "Serviceable stuff there, in the day of need, I doubt not."

"I have every hope they will prove so, my good lord," replied Woodville; and, giving them a sign, each man sprang at once into the saddle, except the one who had led forward his young master's horse, and held the stirrup while he mounted.

As the gay party rode along through the streets of Ghent, the inconstant people, so often in open rebellion against their sovereigns, shouted loud acclamations on the path of the young and graceful Prince, who, in return, bowed low his head, or nodded familiarly to those he knew in the crowd. The distance was but short; but the Count took the opportunity of passing through some of the principal streets of the town, to show the splendour of the greatest manufacturing city at that time in the world, to the young Englishman; and frequently he turned and asked his opinion of this or that as they passed, or pointed out to him the magnificent shops and vast fabrics which lined their road on either side.

There was certainly much to admire; and Richard of Woodville, not insensible of the high importance of the arts, praised, with perhaps a better judgment than most of the haughty nobility of the day would have displayed, the indications of that high commercial prosperity which the courtiers affected to hold in contempt. He would not miss the opportunity, however, of learning something of the kinsman of Ella Brune; and, after answering one of the observations of the Prince, he added—"But as I came from my hostel this morning, sir, I perceive that you have other arts carried to a notable height in the good city of Ghent, besides that of the weavers. I passed by many a fair stall of goldsmiths' work, which seemed to me to display several pieces of fine and curious workmanship."

"Oh! that we have, amongst the best in the world," replied the Count; "though, to say sooth, when we gave you a number of our weavers, to teach you Englishmen that art, we borrowed from you in return much of our skill in working the precious metals. Many of our best goldsmiths, even now, are either Englishmen, or the descendants of those who first came over. I had one right dexterous artificer, who used to dwell with my household, and who is still my servant; but my mother's confessor suspected him of a leaning towards heresy, and exacted that he should be sent forth out of the castle. 'Twas but for a jest at our good father the Pope; but

poor Brune made it worse by saying, when questioned, that as there are three Popes, all living, the confessor might place it on the shoulders of him he liked. Many a grave man, I have remarked, will bear anything rather than a jest; and father Claude, from that moment, would not be satisfied till Nicholas Brune was gone."

"Poor fellow! And what became of him?" asked Richard of Woodville; "I have known some of his family in England."

"Oh, he is in a shop at the corner of the market, close to the castle gate," replied the Prince, "and drives a thriving trade; so that he has gained by the exchange—I hope, both in pocket and in prudence. I have not heard any charge against him lately; and I do believe it was but a silly jest, which none but an Englishman would have ventured."

Richard of Woodville smiled, but made no reply; and in a few minutes after, they reached the gates of the palace, from which he followed the Count of Charolois straight to the presence of Margaret of Bavaria, Duchess of Burgundy, whom they found in an inner chamber, surrounded by a small party of young dames and elderly knights, devising, as the term was in those days, upon some motto which had been laid before them.

Amongst faint traces of what had once been great beauty, the countenance of the Princess displayed deep lines of thought and anxiety. She smiled kindly upon the young stranger, and seemed to him to examine his face with more attention than was ordinary, or, perhaps, altogether pleasant. She made no remark, however, but spoke of the Court of England with better information than her son had displayed, and, somewhat to the surprise of the young Englishman, evinced some knowledge of his own family and history; for, although the Court of Burgundy at this time held the place which that of the Count of Foix had formerly filled, and was the centre of all the news, and, we may say, of all the gossip in Europe—though its heralds and its minstrels made it their business, day and night, to collect all the tales, anecdotes, and rumours of every eminent person throughout the chivalrous world, Richard of Woodville was not aware of ever having done anything to merit such sort of notice.

The conversation was soon turned to other subjects, and the Duchess was in the act of giving her son an account, in a jesting tone, of some visits which she had made that morning to several of the religious institutions of the town, when

a page entered hastily, bearing a packet in his hand. Approaching direct to the Count of Charolois, he presented it on his knee, saying, " From my lord the Duke. The messenger sought you at the castle, sir, in haste, and then came hither."

The Prince took it with an eager and anxious look, tore off the silk and seal without stopping to cut the cord that bound it, and then read the contents, with a countenance which expressed rather preconceived apprehension, perhaps, than emotion caused by the intelligence which the despatch contained. The Duchess of Burgundy remained seated, but gazed upon her son's face with a look more sad than alarmed; and it seemed to Richard of Woodville that, internally, she was meditating on the future course of that fair and noble youth, amidst all the many perils, cares, and griefs, which surrounded, in those days, the paths of princes, rather than even on the present dangers which might affect her husband.

There is a tender timidity in the love of woman for her offspring, which is generated by none of the other relations of life. The husband, or the brother, or the father, is her stay and support—he is there to protect and to defend; and though she may tremble at his danger, or weep for his misfortune, there may be, and often is, some shade of selfish feeling in the dread and in the sorrow. Such is not the case with the child: it is for him she fears, not for herself,—for him entirely, with emotions unmixed, with devotion unalloyed. To save any other dear one, she might readily sacrifice life —from duty, from enthusiasm, from love. But it would still be a sacrifice, in any other case than that of her child: to save him, it would be an impulse.

The Duchess gazed upon the young Count's face then with calm but sad consideration; and perhaps her own memories supplied somewhat too abundantly the materials for fancy to raise up, without aid, a sad model of the future. She knew that honour, or goodness, or even courage, cannot bring security; that innocence cannot escape malice; that virtue cannot insure peace; that wealth, and power, and a high name, are but as butts whereon to hang the targets at which the arrows of the world are aimed; and she feared for her son, seeing, with prophetic eye, the life of turmoil and contention and peril that lay before him.

As soon as he had read the letter, the Count suffered his hand to drop by his side, and gazed upward for a moment or two in thought;—then, turning gracefully to his mother, he

took her hand with a smile, from which was banished every trace or indication of the thoughts that he did not choose to communicate to those around, and saying, "Dear lady mother, we must take counsel," he led her away through a door which those who were acquainted with the palace knew must conduct them to the private cabinet of the Duchess.

The party which remained behind was soon separated into different groups, some of the young nobles who had accompanied the Count taking advantage of the absence of the persons to whom they owed most reverence, for the purpose of saying sweet, whispered things to the fair dames of the Court; some gathering together to inquire of each other, and conjecture amongst themselves, what might be the nature of the tidings received; and two or three others, of either kinder or more pliant dispositions than the rest, seizing the opportunity of cultivating the friendship of the young Englishman. No great time was spent on these occupations, however; for before the Duchess and her son had been gone more than five minutes, the Count returned, and, looking round the circle, said, "Bad tidings scatter good company, my lords. I must ride this very night towards Lille. We will not strip our mother's court here of all her gallant knights and gentlemen, especially in this wise but somewhat turbulent city of Ghent. You, therefore, my lords of Croy, Joigny, St. George, Thyan, and Vergier, with what men are most ready of your trains, I beseech you to give me your fair company ere four of the clock; and you, Master Richard of Woodville, my good friend, if you be so minded, hasten your preparation, and join me at the castle by that hour. You may have occasion," he continued, in a low tone, taking the young Englishman by the arm, "to win the golden spurs, of which we have heard you were disappointed, by no fault of your own, at the battle of Bramham Moor. We shall be back in Ghent before the week be out—so you can leave your baggage here, if you so please. Away then, noble lords!—away!—for we have a long march before us, and, perhaps, a busy day to-morrow."

All was in a moment the bustle and confusion of departure. The young Count turned and went back to the cabinet of his mother, as soon as he had spoken; the ladies of the Duchess rose; and, though some of them paused for an instant, to speak a word in private to those who were about to leave them, retired one by one. The old knights,

and those who were to remain in Ghent, walked out to see their friends and comrades mount; and in less than five minutes the hall was cleared, and the court-yard nearly vacant.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEPARTURE.

"We must to horse without delay, Ned," said Richard of Woodville, as he entered the inn.

"Why, you have been to horse already, master of mine," replied Ned Dyram, in a somewhat sullen tone.

"And must mount again, ere two hours be over," rejoined Woodville; "but where and how can I leave the baggage?"

"Ay, who can tell that?" said the other. "See what it is to march loaded like a carrier's pack-horse, with more things than you can carry!—You are coming back soon, then, to Ghent?"

"Ere the week be out," answered his lord; "so the Count tells me."

"Pray, sir, never mind what Counts tell you," exclaimed Ned Dyram. "Mind what your own senses tell you. If you know where you are going, you can judge as well as a King when you may be back."

"But that I do not know," replied Woodville, somewhat impatiently. "No more words, Master Dyram; but gather everything together into one chamber, and I will speak to the host as to its security."

"Little security for a traveller's baggage in a foreign hotel," rejoined Ned Dyram, "unless some one stays to take charge of it."

"Then, by my honour, you shall be the man to do so," cried his master, thinking by leaving him behind when activity and enterprise were before him, to punish him sufficiently for his saucy tone.

But Ned Dyram seemed not at all disappointed, and replied with an indifferent air, "I am very willing to stay. I am one who does not love journeys I know not whither, and expeditions I know not for what."

"Well, then, you remain," answered his master. "Gather

the things together, as I have said, and you shall be left like a trader's drudge, to look after the goods. Where is Ella Brune?"

"In her own chamber, I fancy," replied Ned Dyram. "She has shut herself up there, ever since you were gone, like a nun."

"Call her down hither to the eating-room," was his lord's reply; and Ned Dyram hastened away.

The fair girl did not make her young protector wait long; and ere he had finished his directions to his train, to prepare all things for immediate departure, she was by his side. Taking her hand kindly, he led her into the common hall of the inn, and told her what he had discovered regarding her kinsman, adding, that as he was about to set out in a few hours with the young Count de Charolois, he would at once accompany her to the house of Nicholas Brune, in order to ascertain if she could have shelter and protection there.

"I know not, my poor Ella," he said, "whether that dwelling may be one where you can safely and happily stop long; for this good man has been somewhat rash in his words, and is under suspicion of leaning to those heretical notions that are so rife; but I shall be back in a week, or less; and then you can tell me all that you think of the matter. You would not wish, I know, to remain with people who would seek to pervert you from the true Catholic faith."

"And you are sure to return in a week?" asked the poor girl, her cheek, which had turned somewhat pale before, resuming its warm hue.

"So the Count assures me," answered Woodville; "and I doubt it not, Ella; but, at all events, I will care for you, be assured, poor thing."

"You tell me to put all the baggage in one room," said Ned Dyram, thrusting in his head; "and the men tell me that they are to have each his harness, and you yours. Two contrary orders, master of mine! Which is to be obeyed?"

"Your wit is strangely halting just now, Ned," answered his master. "Put all, but what I have ordered to be taken, into the room, and see that it be arranged rightly, and quickly too. Now, Ella, cast something over your head, and come with me to your kinsman's shop. What wait you for, sir?"

"To know which suit you are pleased to have," replied Ned Dyram; while Ella passed him to seek the wimple which she had cast off in the house.

"I have given orders on that score to others," answered

his master; and as the man retired, he murmured to himself, "I shall have to send that fellow back to the King. He does not please me."

With a rapid step Richard of Woodville led the way, as soon as Ella joined him, to the wide open space which then, as since, was used as a market, before the old castle of the Counts of Flanders; and, as none of the shops or stalls bore their masters' names inscribed, he entered the first they came to, and inquired which was the house of Nicholas Brune?

"His house," replied the man to whom he had addressed himself in French, "is at the other end of the town; but his shop is yonder," and he pointed with his hand from the door to one of the projecting cases, covered with a network of iron wire, under which the goldsmiths of Ghent at that period exposed some of their larger goods for sale. "The last stall but one," added the trader; and Woodville and his fair companion sped on towards the spot.

At the unglazed window, behind this booth, stood a man of middle age, grey headed, but with a fresh and cheerful countenance, who, as soon as he saw the two approach, demanded, in the common terms of the day, what they sought in his trade. The next instant, however, his eye rested upon Ella's face, which wore a faint smile, and he exclaimed in his native tongue,—"Mesaunter! if there be not my cousin Ella! How art thou, lass? Welcome to Ghent! What news of the good old man? My dame will be right glad to see you both again."

"She will never see him more," replied Ella Brune, in a sad tone; "but of that I will tell you hereafter, kinsman; for I must not stay this noble gentleman, who has befriended me on the way. What I seek to know is, if you can give me shelter at your dwelling for a week, till I can look around me? I will pay for my abiding, Nicholas," she added, perhaps knowing that her cousin, dealing in gold, had somewhat too great a fondness for the pure metal.

But Nicholas Brune was in a generous mood; and he replied, "Shelter shalt thou have, fair Ella, and meat and drink, with right good will, for a week and a day, without cost or payment. If thou stayest with us longer, which God send, we will talk about purveyance. In the meantime I will thank this gentleman for his goodness to you. Why, by my tongs, I think I saw him riding this morning with my noble lord, the Count."

"You did, most likely," replied Richard of Woodville,

"for we passed by your door: but I have farther to ride to-night, Master Nicholas; and now, having seen this fair maiden safe under your protection, I will leave her there. But you had better send up some of your lads with speed to my hostel for the coffer that we brought, as, perchance, Ned Dyram would not let you have it, Ella, when I am gone."

Ella Brune smiled, with an effort to keep up the light cheerfulness which she had lately assumed, and replied, "I think, noble sir, that Master Dyram is not a carl to refuse me aught I ask him; but yet if my kinsman can spare a boy, he had better go at once."

"I will soon find one," answered the stout goldsmith; and, turning to a furnace-room, which lay behind his shop, he called one of his men forth, and bade him follow the gentleman back.

The parting then came between Ella Brune and Richard of Woodville; and bitter was the moment to the poor minstrel girl. She had learned a world of new sensations since she first saw him;—that clinging attachment, which made her long never to be absent from his side for a whole day; that tender regard which made her dread to see him depart, lest evil should befal him by the way; that love which is full of fears for the beloved that we never feel for ourselves. But no one could have told that there were any emotions in her bosom but respect and gratitude, unless the transitory look of deep grief that crossed her face, as she bent down her head to kiss the hand he gave her, could have been seen. It was gone as soon as she raised her eyes again; and her countenance was bright and cheerful, when he said—

"Again my will although I wende,
I may not alway dwellen here,
For everything shall have an ende,
And frendès are not ay ifere:"

and, skilled in all the lore of old ballads, almost as much as himself, she answered at once, from that beautiful song of the days of the Black Prince—

"For frendship and for giftès goode,
For mete and drink so grete plentie,
That lord that raught was on the roode,
He kepe the comeli companie.

"On sea or lande where that ye be,
He governe you withouten greve;
So good disport ye han made me,
Again my will, I take my leve."

And, after again kissing his hand, she let him depart, keeping down by a great effort the tears that struggled to rise up into her eyes. But she would not for the world have suffered one weak emotion to appear before her kinsman, whose character she knew right well, and over whom she proposed at once to assume an influence, which could only be gained by the display of a firm and superior mind.

"And who may that young lord be, pretty Ella?" asked Nicholas Brune: "he seems to take great heed of you, dear kinswoman, and is evidently too high a bird to mate with one of our feather."

"Mate with me!" answered Ella, in a scornful tone. "Oh, no! cousin mine. He will mate, ere long, with one of the sweetest ladies within the shores of merry England, who has been most kind to me too. He is a friend of the King; and when poor old Murdock Brune, my grandsire, and your uncle, was killed, by a fiend of a courtier trampling him under his horse's feet, that gentleman, who saw the deed, threw the monster back from his horse, and afterwards represented my case to the King, who punished the man-slayer, and sent me fifty half-nobles."

Nicholas Brune was affected in two very opposite ways by Ella's words. "My uncle killed by a courtier!" he exclaimed at first, with his eyes flashing fire. "What was his name, maiden—what was his name?"

"Sir Simeon of Roydon," answered Ella Brune; and seeking a scrap of parchment and a reed pen, the goldsmith wrote down the name, as if to prevent it from escaping his memory. But the moment after his mind reverted to another part of Ella's speech. "Fifty half-nobles!" he exclaimed, taking a piece of gold out of a drawer, and looking at it. "That was a princely gift, indeed, Ella; and you owe the young gentleman much gratitude for getting it for you."

"I owe him and his fair lady-love more than I can ever repay, for many an act beside," answered Ella Brune; "but I am resolved, my good kinsman, that I will discharge part of the debt of gratitude, if not the whole. I have a plan in my head, cousin—I have a plan, which I know not whether I will tell you or not."

"Take counsel!—always take counsel!" answered the goldsmith.

"I want none, fair kinsman," replied Ella; "I need neither counsel nor help. My own wit shall be my counsellor; and as I am rich now, I can always get aid when I want it."

"Rich!" said Nicholas;—"what, with fifty half-nobles, pretty maid? It is a heavy sum, truly, but soon spent."

"Were that all," rejoined Ella, "I should not count myself very rich; but I have more than that, cousin—enough to dower me to as gay a citizen as any in Ghent. But here seem a number of gallants gathering round the gate of the Graevensteen. I will back into the far part of the shop, and we will talk more hereafter."

While this conversation had been going on between Nicholas and Ella Brune, Richard of Woodville, followed by the goldsmith's man, had hurried back to the inn, and directed Ned Dyram to deliver over the coffer belonging to the minstrel girl, which had been brought, not without some inconvenience, on the back of one of the mules that carried his own baggage. The young gentleman did not remark that, in executing this order, Ned Dyram questioned the lad cunningly; and busy, to say sooth, in paying his score to the host, and making his final preparations for departure, he forgot for the time his fair companion of the way, quite satisfied that she was safe and comfortable under the roof of her kinsman.

Some time before the hour appointed, Woodville was in the court of the old castle, with his men armed and mounted, in very different guise from their peaceful habiliments of the morning. He contented himself with sending in a page to inform the Count that he was ready, and remained standing by his horse's side; while several of those who had been chosen by the young Burgundian Prince as his companions, entered through the old gate, and paused to admire, with open eyes, the splendid array of the English band, each man armed in plate of the newest and most approved form, according to his degree, and each bearing, slung over his shoulder, the green quiver, filled with the fatal English arrows, which turned so often the tide of battle in the olden time.

After having waited for about ten minutes, the page whom Woodville had sent came back, and conducted him into the castle, where, in a suite of rooms occupying the basement story of one of the towers, he found the young Count, armed and ready to mount. "Here is your lodging after our return," said the Prince, rapidly. "I wished to show it to you ere we set out: these four chambers, and one above. Your horses must be quartered out. And now, *my friend*, let us to the saddle: the rest have come, I think." And, speeding

through the passages to the court-yard, he welcomed gracefully the gentlemen assembled, sprang upon his horse's back, and, followed by his train, rode out over the private bridge belonging to the castle, bending his steps upon the road to the French frontier.

The Count himself, and the small body that accompanied him, amounting in all to about a hundred men, were all armed after the heavy and cumbersome fashion of those days; and each of the several parties of which the troop was composed, had with them one or two led horses or mules, loaded with spare arms and clothing. Considering weight and incumbrances, they moved forward at a very rapid rate—certainly not less than seven miles an hour; and pausing nowhere but to give water to the horses, they had advanced nearly eight leagues on their way ere nightfall. A few minutes after, through the faint twilight which remained in the sky, Richard of Woodville perceived some spires and towers rising at a short distance over the flat country before them; and, on his asking one of the gentlemen, with whom he had held a good deal of conversation during their journey, what town it was that they were approaching, the reply was, "Courtray."

Here the Count of Charolois stopped for about an hour; but, while the horses and most of his attendants contrived to obtain some very tolerable food, the young Prince neither ate nor drank; but, with a mind evidently anxious and disturbed, walked up and down the hall, occasionally talking to Richard of Woodville, the only one who exercised the same abstinence, but never mentioning either the end or object of their journey.

A little after eight o'clock the whole party were in the saddle once more, and, judging from the direction which they took as they issued forth from the gates of Courtray, the gentleman who had been the young Englishman's principal companion on the road informed him that they must be going to Lille. In about two hours and a half more, that city was seen by the light of the moon; and, after causing the gates to be opened, the Count took his way through the streets, but did not direct his course to the château usually inhabited by the Flemish Counts. Alighting at the principal hostelry of the place, he turned to the gentlemen who followed, saying, "Here we must wait for the first news that to-morrow may bring. Make yourselves at ease, noble lords. I am tired, and will to bed."

Without farther explanation, he retired at once with his

personal attendants; and his followers proceeded to amuse themselves as best they might. Richard of Woodville remained with his comrades of the road for about an hour, and, during that time, much of the rough asperity of fresh acquaintance was brushed away. He then followed the example of the young Count, in order to rise refreshed the next morning.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THOSE WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND.

The morning after the departure of Richard of Woodville dawned clear and bright upon the city of Ghent; and the hour of seven found a small party assembled in a neat wooden house, not many yards within the Brabant gate, at the cheerful meal of breakfast. With dagger in hand and hearty good will, Nicholas Brune was hewing away at a huge capon, which, with a pickled boar's head, formed the staple of the meal, helping his good buxom dame and Ella Brune to what he considered choice pieces, and praising the fare with more exuberance than modesty, considering that he was the lord of the feast.

Madame Brune, as we should call her in the present day, but known in Ghent by a more homely appellation, which may be translated "Wife Brune," was a native of the good city; and, by his marriage with her, Nicholas had not only obtained a considerable sum of money, but also various advantages, which placed him nearly, if not altogether, on a footing with the born citizens;—so that, for his fair better half, he had great respect and devotion, as in duty bound. For Ella his reverence had been greatly increased, by finding that she was endowed with a quality very engaging in his opinion—namely, wealth; for the sum which she possessed, though but a trifle in our eyes, was in those days no inconsiderable fortune, as I have already taken the liberty of hinting.

I must not, however, do the worthy goldsmith injustice, and suffer the reader to believe that, had Ella appeared poor and friendless, as he had last seen her, Nicholas Brune would have shown her aught but kindness; for he was a good-hearted and right-minded man; but it is not attributing

too much to the influence of the precious metals in which he worked, to admit that, certainly, he always took them into account in computing the degree of respect which he was bound to pay to others. He would not have done any dishonest or evil act to obtain a whole Peruvian mine, if such a thing had been within the sphere of his imagination; but still, the possession of such a mine would have greatly enhanced, in the eyes of Nicholas Brune, the qualities of any one who might chance to be its proprietor. The only thing, indeed, which puzzled him in the present instance was, how his old uncle could assume the garb of a wandering, and not generally respected race, when he had by him a sum which set him above all chance of want. At first he fancied that the old man's love of music—which was to him, who did not know one note from another, a separate marvel—might have been the motive: the ruling passion strong in death. But then he thought that good old Murdock might have made sweet melody just as well in his own house, as in wandering from court to court, and fair to fair; but immediately after, remembering the old man's peculiar religious notions, with which he was well acquainted, he concluded that zeal, in which he could fully sympathize, must have been the cause of conduct that seemed so strange. This was an inducement he could understand; for, though on no other points was he of an enthusiastic and vehement character, yet he was so in matters of faith; and if he could have made up his mind to any sort of death, it would have been that of a martyr; but, to say truth, he could not bring himself to prefer any way of leaving the world, and thought one as disagreeable as another. Thus he arrived at the conclusion, that his uncle was quite right in using any means to conceal both his wealth and his religion.

However, as I have said, he viewed Ella with a very placable countenance,—invited her to eat and drink; and, as his mind reverted to what she had said, in regard to paying for her food and lodging, he treated it with a mixture of jest and argument, which showed her that he would receive something, though not too much.

"Why, my fair cousin," he said, when she recurred to the subject, "in this good town of Ghent, all is at so base a price that men live for nothing, and are expected to sell their goods for nothing, I can tell you. Now, look at that capon; a fatter one never carried its long legs about a stack of corn, and yet it cost but six liards. You would pay a sterling, or may be two, for such a one in London; and here you might get

a priest as fat to sing a mass for the same money. God help the mummers!"

Ella, however, replied, that she would settle her share with his dame for so long as she stayed, and was proceeding to let her good-humoured cousin into some of her views and intentions, foreseeing that she might need his countenance and assistance, when the outer door opened, and, after a knock at that of the room in which they sat, Ned Dyram entered, to inquire after his fair companion of the way. Ella knew not whether to be pleased or sorry to see him; but surprised she certainly was; for she had thought he was far away from Ghent with his lord. The cause of these contrary emotions was simply, that she felt little pleasure in the man's society, and less in the love that he professed towards her, and yet, having made up her mind to take advantage of the passion he experienced or affected, to work out her own puposes, she saw that his remaining in Ghent might greatly facilitate her views. But the game she had to play was a delicate one, for she had resolved, for no object whatsoever, to give encouragement to his suit; but rather, to leave him to divine her wishes, and promote them if he would, than ask aught at his hands.

Though carried on by that eager and enthusiastic spirit which lingers longer in the breast of woman than in that of man: from which, indeed, everything in life tends to expel it—his own wearing passions, his habits of indulgence, the hard lessons of experience, and the checks of repeated disappointment—yet she felt somewhat alarmed at the new course before her. Perhaps she was not quite sure, though the end ever in view was high and noble, self-devoted, and generous, that the means were right. To have followed Richard of Woodville through the world—to have watched over him as a guardian spirit—to have sacrificed for his sake, and for his happiness, all, anything, peace, security, comfort, and even her own fame—I do not say her own honour—she would not have scrupled; but she might ask herself at that moment, whether it was right and just to sport with the love of another—to use it for her purpose—even to suffer it, when she knew that it could never be returned. And yet woman's eye is very keen; and that selfishness, which frequently bears such a large share in man's love, was so apparent to her view in all Dyram's actions, that she could not but feel less compunction for suffering him to pamper himself with hopes, than if he had been of a nobler and a higher nature.

Whatever were the ideas that crossed her mind, and kept

her silent for a moment, they rapidly passed away; and when her cousin, after gazing at the intruder for an instant, asked who he was and what he wanted, she answered for him, in a gay tone, affecting the coquettish airs then very common in a higher class, "Oh! he is a servant of mine, Nicholas—vowed to the tip of my finger. I do not intend ever to have him; but if the poor creature is resolved to sigh at my feet, I must e'en let him. Pray you, give him welcome. What news, servant? How is it that you have not followed your lord?"

"Because," replied Ned Dyram, "I loved best to stay with my lady."

"Nay," answered Ella Brune, "call me not *your* lady. You are my servant, but I am yours not at all, either as lady or servant. You have not yet merited such grace."

In this light and jesting tone she continued to treat him; and though perhaps such conduct might have repelled a more sensitive and delicate lover, with Ned Dyram it but added fuel to the fire. Each day he came to visit—each day returned with stronger passion in his heart. Jest, indeed, which was far from natural to her character or to her feelings at the time, Ella could not always keep up: though great and stern resolution is often the source of a certain bitter mirth at minor things. But in every graver moment she spoke to Dyram of Richard of Woodville and of Mary Markham—for as yet she knew her by no other name. She did so studiously, and yet so calmly and easily, that not the slightest suspicion of the real feelings in her heart ever crossed the mind of her hearer. Of Mary, she told him far more than he had hitherto gathered from his companions in Woodville's train, and dwelt long upon her beauty, her gentleness, her kindness. Following closely her object, she even found means to hint, one day, a regret that she had not been permitted to follow the young Englishman on his expedition.

"What would I have given," she said, "to have had your chance of going with him; and yet you chose to remain behind!"

"Indeed, fair Ella!" he exclaimed; "what made you so anxious to go?"

"Nay," answered the girl, with a mysterious look, "do you expect me to tell you my secrets, bold man? I would give a chain of gold, however, to be able to follow your master about the world for just twelve months, if it could be done without risking my own fair fame. Oh! for one of those fairy girdles that made the wearer invisible!"

"Methinks you love him, Mistress Ella," replied Ned Dyram, more from pique than suspicion.

But Ella answered, boldly and at once, though he had touched the wound somewhat roughly.

"Yes, I do love him well!" she answered; "and I have cause, servant of mine. But it is not for that. I have a vow; I have a purpose; and though they must be executed, I know not well how to do so. I ought not to have left him, even now."

"I dare say he would have taken you, if you had asked him!" replied the man.

"And what would men have said?" demanded Ella. "What would you have thought yourself—what might your young lord have thought—though he is not so foolish as yourself? Most likely you would all have done me wrong in your fancies. No, no!—if I go, it must be secretly. But there, get you gone; I will tell you no more."

"Nay, tell on, sweet Ella!" exclaimed Ned Dyram; "and perhaps I may aid you."

"Get you gone, I say!" replied Ella Brune. "I will tell you no more, at least for the present. You help me!—Why, were I to trust to you for help in such a matter as this, should I not put myself entirely in your power?"

"But I would never misuse it, Ella," answered Ned Dyram.

"No, no!" she exclaimed; "I will never put myself in any man's power, unless I suffer him to put a ring upon my finger; and then, of course, I am as much his slave as if he had a ring round my neck. There, leave me! leave me! You may come again to-morrow, and see if I am in a better mood. I feel cross to-day."

Ned Dyram retired; but he was destined to return before the day was over, and to bring her tidings, which, however unpleasant in themselves, rendered his coming welcome. As he took his way back towards the inn, just at the corner of the Vendredi market-place, he met a party of travellers, and heard the English tongue; but he took little heed, for his thoughts were full of Ella Brune; and he had passed half across the square, when one of the horsemen rode after him, and said his lord desired to speak with him. Ned Dyram looked up, and at once remembered the man's face. For reasons of his own, however, he suffered not the slightest trace of recognition to appear on his own countenance. As the horseman spoke in English, he replied in the same tongue, asking who was his master, and what he wanted?

"He is an English knight," replied the servant; "and what he wants he will tell you himself."

"But I am not fond of trusting myself in English knights' hands," answered Ned Dyram; "they sometimes use one badly: so tell me his name, or I do not go."

"His name is Sir Simeon of Roydon," replied the man: "a very good name, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes! I will go to him," replied Ned Dyram. "He used to be about the Court, when I was a greater man than I am now;" and he walked straight up to the spot where Sir Simeon of Roydon had halted his horse, and lowly doffed his bonnet as he approached.

"My knave tells me," said the knight, "that you are a servant of the King's. Is it so?"

"It was so once, sir," replied Ned Dyram; and then added, looking round to the servant who had followed him, "So, it was he who told you: I do not remember him!"

"Perhaps not," answered the knight; "but you came up with him once, when he was following a young woman in whom I take some interest. Do you know where she is now?"

"It may be so," replied Ned Dyram; "but I talk not of such things in the street, good sir."

Simeon of Roydon paused and mused, gazing in the man's face the while. "Whom do you serve now?" he demanded, at length.

"Why, I am employed by no one, at present," said Ned Dyram; not exactly telling a falsehood, but implying one.

"Well, then, come to me to-night, some time after sunset," rejoined Sir Simeon, "and we will speak more. You know the convent of the Dominicans; I am to lodge there, for the prior is my cousin. Ask for Sir Simeon of Roydon, or the English knight, and the porter will show you my lodging."

"At the Dominicans!" cried Ned Dyram; "why, you are not going thither now—at least, that is not the way."

"Is it not?" exclaimed the knight. "Why this fellow agreed to guide me;" and he pointed to a man in the dress of a peasant, who accompanied them.

"Then he is guiding you wrong," replied Ned Dyram. "Go straight up that street, follow the course of the river to the left, and, when you have passed the second bridge, turn up to the right, cross the Lys, and you will see the Dominicans right before you. He was taking you to the Carmelites."

"Well, don't fail to come," rejoined Sir Simeon of Roy-

don; and he then rode on, pouring no very measured abuse upon the head of his guide.

The moment he was gone, Dyram hurried back to Ella Brune; and a long and eager conversation ensued between them, of a very different tone and character from any which had taken place before. Ella was obliged to trust and to confide in him, to tell her reasons for abhorring and shrinking from the sight of one whom her evil fortune seemed continually to bring across her path, and to consult with him on the means to be employed for the purpose of concealing her presence in Ghent from Roydon's eyes, and of discovering what chance had brought him to the same city so soon after herself.

Nothing, perhaps, could have given Dyram more satisfaction than this result. The new relations which it established between Ella and himself—the opportunities which it promised of serving, assisting her, and laying her under obligations—the constant excuse which it afforded for seeing her, and consulting with her on subjects of deep interest to herself—were all points which afforded him much gratification. But that was not all: he fancied that he saw the means of obtaining a power over her—a command as well as an influence. Vague schemes presented themselves to his mind of entangling her in a chain that she could not break—of binding her to himself by ties that she could not shake off—and of using the haughty and vicious knight, whose character he easily estimated, from the information now given him by Ella, as a tool for the accomplishment of his own purposes. I have said that these schemes were vague; and perhaps they might never have taken any more definite a form, had not other events occurred which led him to carry them out almost against his own will. Man, in the midst of circumstances, is like one in a Dædalian labyrinth, where a thousand paths are ready to confound him, a thousand turnings to lead him to the same end, and that end disappointment; while but one, of all the many ways, can reach the issue of success.

That night, soon after sunset, Dyram stood before the gate of the Dominican monastery, and, ringing the bell, asked the porter for the lodging of Sir Simeon of Roydon. It was evident to him that orders had been given for his admission, for, without any inquiry, he was immediately shown to a small chamber, where he found the knight alone. A curious contest of the wits then ensued, for the knight was shrewd, and had determined, if it were within the scope of

possibility, to gain from Ned Dyram all the information he could afford; and Dyram, on the contrary, had resolved to give none but that which suited his purpose. Both were keen and cunning men; neither very scrupulous; each selfish in a high degree, though in a somewhat different line; and both eager and fiery in pursuit of their objects.

The first question of the knight to Ned Dyram was, what had brought him to Ghent?

"I came hither," he replied, at once, "with Master Richard of Woodville."

The knight's brow was covered by a sudden cloud, and he demanded, in a sharp tone, "Is he here now?—Are you his servant, then?"

"He is not here now," answered the man; "he has gone on with the Count de Charolois, and did not think fit to take me with him any further."

"Then you are out of employment?" asked the knight.

"For the present, I am," said Ned Dyram; "but I shall soon find as much as I want. I am never at a loss, sir knight."

"That is lucky for yourself," replied Simeon of Roydon; and then abruptly added, "Will you take service with me?"

"No!" answered Dyram, bluntly. "I will take service with no one any more. I was not meant for a varlet. I can do better things than be the serving-man of any knight or noble."

"What can you do?" demanded Roydon, with a somewhat sarcastic smile.

"What can I not?" exclaimed Dyram. "I can read better than a priest—write better than a clerk. I can speak languages that would make your ears tingle, without understanding what you heard. I can compound all essences and drugs; I can work in gold, silver, or iron; and I know some secrets that would well nigh raise the dead."

"Indeed!" said the knight. "Then you must be a monk, or a doctor of Oxford."

"Neither," replied the man; "but I see you disbelieve me. Shall I give you a proof of what I can do?"

"Yes," answered Sir Simeon; "I should like to see some spice of your skill."

"In what way shall it be," asked Ned Dyram. "If you will order up some charcoal, with this little instrument and these pinchers I will make you a chain to go round your wrist out of a gold noble; or, if there be a Greek book in the monastery, I will read you a page therefrom, and ex-

pound it, in the presence of whom you will, as a judge; for well I wot you yourself know nothing about it."

"Nor wish to know," replied the knight; "but I will have neither of these experiments; the one would be too long, the other too tedious. You said that you had secrets that would well nigh raise the dead. I have heard of such things, and I should like to see them tried."

"Would you not be afraid?" asked Ned Dyram.

"No!—Why?" answered Sir Simeon of Roydon. "The dead cannot hurt me."

"Assuredly," said Ned Dyram; "but yet, when we call for those who are in their graves, we can never surely tell who may come. It is not always the spirit we wish that answers to our voice; and that man's heart must be singularly free, who, in the days of fiery youth, has done no deed towards the silent and the cold, that might make him shrink to see them rise from their dull bed of earth, and look him in the face again."

"I am not afraid," said Roydon, after a moment's thought. "Do it if you can."

"Nay, I said I had secrets that would *well nigh* raise the dead," answered Ned Dyram. "I neither told you that they would, nor that I was willing."

"Ha! it seems to me you are a boaster, my good friend," exclaimed the knight, with a sneer. "Can you do anything in this sort, or can you not?"

"I am no boaster, proud knight," replied Ned Dyram, in an angry tone, "and I only say what I am able to perform. 'Tis you that make it more than I ever did say; but if you would know what I can do, I tell you I can raise the dead for my own eye, though not for yours. That last great secret I have not yet obtained; but I trust ere long to do so; and as you are incredulous, like all other ignorant men, I will give you proof this very night."

"But how shall I know, if I do not see the shapes myself?" demanded Sir Simeon of Roydon.

"I will tell you what I behold," rejoined the man, "and you must judge for yourself. Those whom I call up shall all have some reference to you. Have you a mirror there?"

"Yes," replied the knight; and while he rose to search for one, Dyram strewed some small round balls upon the table, jet black in colour, and apparently soft. The knight brought forward one of the small, round, polished mirrors of the day, which generally formed part of the travelling apparatus of both sexes in the higher class; and, setting it

upright, Dyram brought each of the little balls for a single instant to the flame of the lamp, and laid them down before the mirror. A thin white smoke, of a faint, but delicate odour, instantly rose up and spread through the room, producing a feeling of languor in those who breathed the perfume, and giving a ghastly likeness to all things round; and, kneeling down before the table, Ned Dyram gazed into the glass, pronouncing several words in a strange tongue, unintelligible to the knight. The moment after his eyes opened wide, and seemed almost starting from his head; and the knight exclaimed eagerly, "What is it you see?"

"I see," replied the man, "a gentleman in a black robe seated at a table; and he looks very sad. He is young and handsome, too, with coal-black hair curling round his brow."

"Has he no mark by which I can distinguish him?" asked the knight.

"Yes," answered Dyram; "but it matters not for him, as I see he is amongst the living. It is the absent who generally come first, and then the dead. However, here's a scar upon his right cheek, as if from an old wound."

"Sir Henry Dacre!" murmured Roydon. "Try again, man—try again; and let it be the dead this time."

Dyram pronounced some more words, apparently in the same language; and then a smile came upon his countenance. "A sweet and beautiful lady!" he said. "How proudly she walks, as if earth were not good enough to bear her! Ha! how is that?"—and, as he spoke, his face assumed a look of terror: his lip quivered, his eye stared; and the countenance of Sir Simeon of Roydon turned deadly pale.

"What do you see?" demanded the knight, in a voice scarcely audible. "What do you see?"

"She walks by a stream!" cried Dyram, in a terrible tone, "and the sun is just below the sky. Some one meets her, and they talk. He seizes her by the throat!—she struggles—he holds fast—he casts her into the river! Hark, how she shrieks! She sinks—she rises—she shrieks again! Oh God! some one help her!—she is gone!"

All was silent in the room for a minute: and Ned Dyram, wiping his brow, as if recovering from some great excitement, gazed round him by the light of the lamp. Simeon of Roydon had sunk into a seat; and his face was so ashy pale, the lids of his eyes so tightly closed, that for a moment his companion thought he had fainted. The instant after, however, he murmured, "Ah! necromancer!" and then

starting up, exclaimed, "What horrible vision is this? Who is it thou hast seen?"

"Nay, I know not," answered Ned Dyram. "How can I tell? They spoke not;—'twas but a sight. But one thing is certain, that either the man or the woman is closely allied to you in some way."

"What was he like?" demanded the knight, abruptly.

"It was so dark when he came that I could not see him well," replied Dyram. "He was a tall, fair man; but that was all I saw. The lady was more clearly visible; for when she came, there was a soft evening light in the sky."

"Why, fool, it has been dark these two hours," cried the knight.

"Not in that glass," answered the other. "When she appeared first, it was a calm sunset, and I saw her well; but it speedily grew dark, and then I could descry nothing but her form, first struggling with her murderer, and then with the deep waters."

"Her murderer!" repeated Simeon of Roydon—"her murderer! What was she like?"

"A vain and haughty beauty, I should say," replied the man; "with dark hair, and seemingly dark eyes, a proud and curling lip, and——"

"Enough, enough!" answered Simeon of Roydon, with resumed composure. "I know her by your description, and by the facts; but in the man you are mistaken—he was a dark man who did the deed, or suspicion belies him."

"'Twas a fair man, that I saw," rejoined Dyram, in a decided tone; "of that, at least, I am sure, though the shadows were too deep to let me view his face distinctly. Shall I look again, to see any more, sir knight?"

"No, no—it is sufficient!" cried Simeon of Roydon, somewhat sharply. "I see you have not overstated what you can do. Hearken to me; I will give you employment in your own way—much or little, as you like. I would fain hear more of this girl, Ella Brune—of where she is, what she is doing. I would fain find her—speak with her; but I am discomposed to-night. This lady that you saw but now was very dear to me; her sad fate affects me deeply even now. See, how I am shaken by these memories!" And in truth his hand, which he stretched forth to lay the mirror flat upon the table, trembled so, that he nearly let it fall. "But of this girl, Ella Brune," he continued: "have you known her long?—know you where she now is?"

"Nay, I was but sent to bear her a letter from Richard of

Woodville, and to counsel her from him, to go to York," replied Dyram. "Then, as to where she is, I cannot say exactly—not to a point, that is to say; but I can soon learn, if I am well entreated and well paid!"

"That you shall be," rejoined the knight. "Come to me to-morrow early, and we will talk more. To-night I am unfit. Here is some gold for you for what you have done. Good night, good night!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ENTERPRISE.

The young Count of Charolois stood in the court-yard of the inn, about nine o'clock on the morning that followed his arrival in Lille, with a letter in his hand, and a countenance not altogether well pleased. There was a gentleman beside him, somewhat advanced in years, bearing knightly spurs upon his heels, and armed at all points but the head, the grey hair of which was partly covered with a small velvet cap, and to him the Prince spoke eagerly; while the various persons who had attended him from Ghent stood at a respectful distance, waiting his commands as to their future proceedings. Richard of Woodville had not remarked the old knight with the band before; and turning to one of the young nobles with whom he had formed some acquaintance, he asked who he was.

"Why, do you not know?" exclaimed his companion. "That is Sir Walter, Lord of Roucq, one of our most renowned leaders. He has just arrived from Douay, they say; but the Count seems angry with that letter the courier brought him from Paris. Things are going ill there, I doubt, and we shall soon have a levy of arms. That Court is full of faitours and treachers—a crop of bad corn, which wants Burgundian hands to thin it."

"I trust that you will permit a poor Englishman to put in a sickle," said Woodville, laughing; "or at least to have the gleanings of the field."

"Oh! willingly, willingly!" replied the young lord, with better wit than might have been expected. "I cannot but think your good sovereigns in England have but been hesitating till other arms have begun the harvest, in order to

take full gleanings of that poor land—but see, the Count is looking round to us."

"Hearken, my lords," said the Count. "It is my father's will that I should remain in Lille, while this noble knight rides on an expedition of some peril to the side of Tournay. He says the Lord of Roucq has men enough for what is wanted, and that some of you must abide with me here; but still I will permit any gentlemen to go who may choose to do so, provided a certain number stay with me; so make your election."

The young nobles of Burgundy were rarely unwilling to take the field; but in the present instance, there were two or three motives which operated to make them in general decide in favour of staying with the Count of Charolois. In the first place, they knew of no enterprise that could be achieved on the side of Tournay which offered either glory or profit. There were a few bands of revolted peasantry and brigands in that quarter, whom the Count had threatened to suppress; but such a task was somewhat distasteful to them. In the second place, they were not insensible to the fact, that by choosing to stay with the Prince, they offered him an indirect compliment, which was especially desirable at a moment when he seemed angry at not being permitted to lead them himself; and, in the third place, the Lord of Roucq was inferior in rank to most of them, though superior in military reputation; and he was, moreover, known to be a somewhat strict disciplinarian, a quality by no means agreeable either to the French or Burgundian gentlemen.

"I came to serve under you, my lord the Count," said the young Ingram de Croy; "and if you do not go, and I am permitted to choose, where you stay I will remain."

The old Lord of Roucq gazed at him coldly, but made no observation; and the same feeling was found general, till the Count turned with a smile to Richard of Woodville, asking his choice.

"Why, my noble lord," replied the young Englishman, "if I could serve you here, I should be willing enough to stay; but, as that is not the case, I had better serve you elsewhere; and wherever this good knight goes, doubtless there will be some honour to be gained under his pennon."

Walter of Roucq still remained silent, but he did not forget the willingness of the foreign gentleman; and one very young noble of Burgundy, whose fortune and fame were yet to make, taking courage at Woodville's words, proposed to go also.

"I have but few men with me, my lord the Count," he said, with the modesty which was affected, if not felt, by all young men in chivalrous times; "and, as you know, I have but small experience; wishing to gain which, I will, by your good leave, serve under the Lord of Woodville here, who, I think you said, had been already in several stricken fields, and was a comrade of the noble King of England."

"King Henry calls him his friend, Monsieur de Lens, in his letter to me," replied the Count; "and I know he has gained *los* in several battles, though I have been told that he was disappointed of his spurs at Bramham Moor (he did not pronounce the word very accurately); because such was the trust placed in his discretion, that he was sent to the late King just before the fight, when no one else could be trusted."

Again Richard of Woodville marvelled to find his whole history so well known; but the Count went on immediately to add to the young Englishman's troop ten of his own men-at-arms. "You, Monsieur de Lens, brought seven, I think," he said; "so that will be some small reinforcement to your *menée*, my Lord of Roucq;" and drawing that gentleman aside, the Prince whispered to him for some moments.

"Willingly, willingly, fair sir," replied the old knight, to whatever it was he said. "God forbid I should stay any noble gentleman anxious to do doughty deeds. He shall have the cream of it, and it shall go hard if I give him not the means to win the spurs. Monsieur de Woodville, I set out in half an hour. I will but have some bread and a cup of wine, and then am ready for your good company."

But little preparation was needed, for all had been kept ready to set out at a moment's notice. Nevertheless, in the little arrangements which took place ere they departed, there sprang up between Richard of Woodville and the Lord of Lens what may be called the intimacy of circumstances. The young Burgundian, though brave, and well practised in the use of arms, was diffident, from inexperience, of more active and perilous scenes than the tilt-yard of his father's castle, or the jousting-lists in the neighbouring town; and he was well satisfied to place himself under the immediate direction of one who, like Richard of Woodville, had fought in general engagements, and served in regular armies. He had also some dread of the Lord of Roucq; but by fusing his party into the English gentleman's band, he placed another between himself and the severe old soldier, so that he trusted to escape the harsh words which their commander

was not unaccustomed to use. To Woodville, then, he applied for information regarding every particular of his conduct; how he was to place his men, where he was to ride himself, and a thousand other particulars, making his companion smile sometimes at the timidity which he had personally never known, from having been accustomed, even in boyhood, to the troublous times and continual dangers which followed the usurpation of the throne by the first of the Lancasterian House.

While they were conversing over these matters, one of the pages of the Count of Charolois joined them from the inn, and bade the English gentleman follow him to the Prince. The Count was alone in a small bed-room up stairs, and the temporary vexation which his countenance had expressed some time before, had now quite passed away. He met Richard with a laughing countenance, and, holding out his hand to him, exclaimed, addressing him by the name he had given him ever since their first interview, "God speed you, *my friend.* These rash nobles of ours have taken themselves in; and though stern old De Roucq does not wish it mentioned that he is going on such an errand, I would have you know it, that you may take advantage of opportunity. I love you better for going with him than staying with me, as you may well judge, when I tell you that his object is to meet my father, and guard him from Paris to Lille, if the Duke can effect his escape from the French court. My father would not have me come, for he is likely to be pursued, it seems; and he says in his letter, that should mischance befall him, while I remain in Lille there will still be a Duke of Burgundy to crush this swarm of Armagnac bees, even should they sting him to death. However, you must not tell De Roucq that I have given you such tidings; for if he knew it, he would scold me like a Nieuport fishwoman, with as little reverence as he would a horse-boy."

"I will be careful, my good lord," replied Richard of Woodville; "but if such be the case, had we better not have more men with us? Six or seven and twenty make but a small band against all the chivalry of France."

"Oh! he has got two hundred iron-handed fellows beyond the gates," replied the Prince. "But, hark! there is his voice. Quick! quick! you must not stay!" and hurrying down into the little square before the hostel, the young Englishman found the men drawn up, and the Lord of Roucq, with a page holding his horse, and his foot in the stirrup.

"Ah! you are long, sir," said the old knight, swinging

himself slowly up into the saddle. Nevertheless, Richard of Woodville was on horseback before him; for, laying his hand upon his charger's shoulder, he vaulted at once, armed at all points as he was, into the seat, and in another instant was at the head of his men.

"A boy's trick!" said the old soldier, with a smile. "Never think, young gentleman, that you can make up for present delay by after activity: it is a dangerous fancy."

"I know it, my good lord," replied Richard of Woodville; "but I had to speak with my lord the Count before I departed."

"Well, sir, well," answered the Lord of Roucq; and, wheeling round his horse, he gazed over the little band, marking especially the fine military appearance, sturdy limbs, and powerful horses of the English archers, with evident satisfaction. "Ah!" he said, "good stuff, good stuff! Have they seen service?"

"Most of them," replied Richard of Woodville.

"They shall see more, I trust, before I have done with them," rejoined the old knight. "Come, let us go. March!" —and, leading the way through the streets of Lille, a little in advance of the rest of the party, while Richard of Woodville and the young Lord of Lens followed side by side at the head of their men, he soon reached the gates of the city, without exchanging a word with any one by the way.

"Why, this is strange," said the Lord of Lens to his companion, in a low voice, as they turned up towards the side of Douay, instead of taking the road to Tournay. "This is not the march that the Count said was laid out for us. The old man knows his road, I suppose?"

"No fear of that," replied Richard of Woodville; "our business, comrade, is to follow, and to ask no questions. Perhaps there is better luck for us than we expected. Commanders do not always tell their soldiers what they are leading them to;" and turning his head as they came forth into the broad open road which extended to Peronne, through the numerous strong towns at that time comprised in the Flemish possessions of the House of Burgundy, he gave orders, in French and English, for his men to form in a different order —nine abreast. Some little embarrassment was displayed in executing this manœuvre; and he had to explain and direct several times before it was performed to his satisfaction.

The Lord of Roucq looked round and watched the whole proceeding, but made no observation; and, after proceeding for about two miles farther on the way, Woodville again

changed the order of his men, when the old commander suddenly demanded, "What are you playing such tricks for?"

"For a good reason, sir," replied Richard of Woodville; "I have men under me who have never been accustomed to act together—my own people, those of this young lord, and the men-at-arms of my lord the Count. I know not how soon you may call upon us for service, or what that service may be; and it is needful they should have some practice, that they may be alert at their work. I have learnt that, in time of need, it does not do to lose even a minute in forming line."

"Ay, you Englishmen," replied the old lord, "were always better aware of that fact than we are. There would never have been a Cressy, if Frenchmen would have submitted to discipline. They will fight like devils; but each man has such an opinion of himself, that he will fight in his own way, forgetting that one well-trained man, who obeys orders promptly, is better than a hundred who do nothing but what they like themselves. Ride up and talk with me, young men; I do not see why we should not be friends together, though those satin jackets at Lille did not choose to march with old Walter de Roucq." After speaking with some bitterness of the turbulent spirit and insubordination which existed in all continental armies, the Lord of Roucq led the conversation to the military condition of England, and inquired particularly into the method, not only of training the soldiers of that country, but of educating the youths throughout the land to the early use of arms, which he had heard was customary there.

"Ay, there is the difference between you and us," he said, when Woodville had explained the facts to him;—"you are all soldiers; and your yeomen, as you call them, are as serviceable as your knights and gentlemen. With us, who would ever think of taking a boor from the plough, to make a man-at-arms of him? No one dares to put a steel cap on his head, unless he has some gentle blood in his veins, though it be but half a drop, and then he is as conceited of it as if he were descended from Charlemagne. I have charge to give you, sir, the best occasions," he continued, still addressing Woodville, "and I will not fail; for I see you know what you are about, and will do me no discredit."

"I beseech you, my good lord, to let me share them with him," said Monsieur de Lens; "I am as eager for renown as any man can be."

"You will share them, of course, as one of his band," re-

plied the old soldier, "and I doubt not, young gentleman, will do very well. I will refuse honour to no one who wins it;" and thus conversing, they rode on as far as Pont a Marq, where they found a large body of men-at-arms waiting for the old Lord of Roucq.

Richard of Woodville remarked that they were most of them middle-aged men, with hard and weather-beaten countenances, who had evidently seen a good deal of service; but he observed also that—probably, from the unwillingness of the Burgundian nobility to submit to anything like strict discipline — there seemed to be few persons of distinction in the corps, and not one knight but the old Lord himself. Without any pause, the whole party marched on to Douay, the young Englishman losing no opportunity of exercising his men in such evolutions as the nature of the ground permitted, and many of the old soldiers of De Roucq watching his proceedings in silence, but with an attentive and inquiring eye.

At Douay they halted for an hour and a half, to feed their horses and to take some refreshment; and then marching on, they did not draw a rein again till Cambray appeared in sight. Here all the party expected to remain the night; for Cambray, as the reader well knows, is a good day's march from Lille, especially for men covered with heavy armour, and for horses who had to carry not only the weight of their masters and their masters' harness, but steel manefaires, testières, and chanfrons of their own. The orders of the commander, however, showed them, before they entered the gates, that such repose was not to fall to their lot, for he directed them to seek no hostel, but to quarter themselves, without dividing, in the market-place, and there to feed their beasts.

"'Tis a fine evening," he said, "and you shall have plenty of food and wine; but we must march on, for an hour or two, at night, that we may be in time to-morrow. If we have more space than enough in the morning, why the destriers will be all the fresher."

No one ventured to make any reply, though the men-at-arms of the Count of Charolois felt somewhat weary with their unwonted exertion, and would fain have persuaded themselves that their beasts could go no farther that night. Their leader, or vingtner, who held the rank of a sergeant of the present day, and usually commanded twenty men, went so far as to hint his opinion on this subject to Richard of Woodville; but the young Englishman stopped him in an

instant, replying coldly, "If your horses break down we must find you others. We have nothing to do but to obey."

The young Englishman took care, however, that the chargers of his whole party should have everything that could refresh them, and he spared not his own purse to procure for them a different sort of food from that which was provided for the rest. The crumb of bread soaked in water was a favourite expedient with the English of that day, as it is now with the Germans, for restoring the vigour of a wearied horse; and he made bold to dip the bread in wine, which, on those beasts that would take it, seemed to produce a very great effect.

After halting for two hours, the march was renewed; and wending slowly onward, they reached the small town—for it was then a town—of Gonlieu, having accomplished a distance of nearly eighteen leagues. It was within half an hour of midnight when they arrived, and the good people of the place had to be roused from their beds to provide them with lodgings; but a party of two hundred men-at-arms was not in that day to be refused anything they might think fit to require; and, in the different houses and stables of the town, they were all at length comfortably housed.

Richard of Woodville was not one of those men who require long sleep to refresh them after any ordinary fatigue; and though, with the care and attention of an Arab, he spent a full hour in inspecting the treatment of his horses before he lay down to rest, yet, after a quiet repose of about four hours and a half, he awoke, and instantly sprang from the pallet which had been provided for him. He then immediately roused the young Lord of Lens, who, with five or six others, slept in the same chamber; but the poor youth gazed wildly round him, at first seeming to have forgotten where he was; and it required a hint from his English friend, that the old Lord of Roucq was a man likely to be up early in the day, ere he could make up his mind to rise.

Woodville and his companion had been in the stable about five minutes, and were just setting the half-awakened horse-boys to their work, when a voice was heard at the open door, saying, "This is well!—this is as it should be!" and, turning round, they saw the figure of the old knight moving slowly away to the quarters of another party.

In an hour more, they were again upon the road; but their march was this day less fatiguing; and Woodville remarked that their veteran leader seemed to expect some intelligence from the country into which they were advancing;

for at each halting place he caused inquiries to be made for messengers seeking him, and more than once stopped the peasantry on the road, questioning them strictly, though no one clearly seemed to understand his drift. He seemed, too, to be somewhat undecided as to his course, and talked of going on to Orvillers, or at least to Conchy; but he halted for the night, however, at Tilloloy, and quartered his men in that village and St. Nicaise.

Woodville and his party were lodged in the latter, where also the old commander slept; but about three in the morning the young Englishman was roused by voices speaking, followed by some one knocking at a neighbouring door; and half-raised upon his arm, he was listening to ascertain, if possible, what was the cause of this interruption of their repose, when the door of the room was opened, as far as the body of one of the English yeomen, who slept across it, would permit.

"Halloo! Master Woodville," said the voice of the Lord of Roucq. "Up, and to horse—your beasts are not broken down, I trust?"

"They have had time to rest since six last night," replied Woodville, "and will be found as fresh as ever, for they feed well."

"Like all true Englishmen," answered the old soldier. "Join me below in a minute; I have something to say to you."

Dressing himself, and giving hasty orders for the horses to be fed and led out, the young Englishman went down to the ground-floor, where everything was already in bustle, and perhaps in some confusion. The Lord of Roucq was surrounded by several of his own officers, and was giving them orders in the sharp tones of impatience and hurry.

"Ha! Sir Englishman," he exclaimed, as he saw Woodville, "how long will it take you to be in the saddle?"

"Half an hour," replied Richard of Woodville.

"And these men want two hours!" cried the old leader. "Well, hark ye!"—and leading Woodville aside, he whispered, "'Tis as well as it is: there will be no jealousy. Get your horses out with all speed, and you shall have the cream of the affair, as I promised the young Count. You must know I am bound to meet our good Duke at Pont St. Maxence. He makes his escape from Paris this morning; and as he brings but four men with him, I fear there may be those who will try to stop him. His plan is, to go out to hunt with the King in the forest of Hallate, and there to be met

by some one bringing him letters, as if from Flanders, requiring his hasty return. Then he will decently bid the King adieu, and ride away. I was in hopes to have had time enough to be near at hand with my whole force, to give him aid if they pursue or stay him, though he tells me in the packet just received, to meet him at Pont St. Maxence. However, it is as well that some should proceed farther; and if you can get the start of us, you can take the occasion."

"I will not miss it," replied Woodville; "but two things may be needful—one, a letter to the Duke; and another, some one who knows the road and the forest."

"What sort of letter?" demanded De Roucq, sharply. "What is the letter for?"

"To call the Duke back to Flanders," replied Richard of Woodville. "I will be the person to deliver it, should need be."

"Ay, that were as well," answered the old knight; "though doubtless he has arranged already for some one to meet him; yet no harm of two. It shall be written as if others had been sent before. I will call my clerk, for of writing I know nought."

"In the meanwhile I will see for a guide," answered Woodville; and going forth, he inquired, amongst the attendants of the young Lord of Lens and the men-at-arms of the Count of Charolois, for some one who was acquainted with the forest of Hallate. One of the latter had been there in former days, and remembered something of the roads, with which amount of information Richard of Woodville was forced to content himself, trusting to meet with some peasant on the spot who might guide him better. He then gave orders for bringing out the horses without farther delay, and for charging each saddle with two feeds of corn; and returning to the Lord of Roucq, he found him dictating a letter, by the light of a lamp, to a man with a shaven crown. Before it was finished, for the style of the good knight was not fluent, the jingle of arms and the tramp of horses' feet were heard before the inn; and looking round, with a well-satisfied smile, the old soldier exclaimed, "Ha! this is well!—This is the way to win *los*. There, that will do, Master Peter; fold and seal it. Then for the superscription, as you know how."

Some five minutes, however, were spent upon heating the wax, tying up the packet, and writing the address, during which time Richard of Woodville looked on with no small impatience, fearing that he might be forestalled by others in executing a task which promised some distinction. At length

all was complete; and, taking the letter eagerly, he hurried out and sprang into the saddle.

The Lord of Rouecq added various cautions and directions, walking by the young Englishman's horse for some way through the village; but at length he left him; and putting his troop to a quicker pace, Woodville rode on towards Pont St. Maxence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ACHIEVEMENT.

The forest of Hallate—of which the great forest of Chantilly, as it is called, is in fact but an insignificant remnant, —was, in the days of Philip of Valois, one of the most magnificent woods at that time in Europe, giving its name to a whole district, in the midst of which was situated the fine old palace and abbey of St. Christopher, or St. Christofle en Hallate, the scene of many of the most important transactions in French history. I do not find that the palace was much used in the reign of Charles VI.; and it was very possibly going to decay, though the abbey attached to it still remained tenanted by its monks, and the forest still afforded the sport of the chase to the French monarchs and their court, being filled with wolves, stags, boars, and even bears (if we may believe the accounts of the time), which were preserved with more care, from all but princely hands, than even the subjects of the Sovereign.

The great variety of the ground—the hills, the dales, the fountains, the cliffs, that the district presented—the rivers that intersected it, the deep glades and wild savannahs of the forest itself—the villages, the towns, the chapels, the monasteries, which nestled themselves, as it were, into its bosom—the profound solitude of some parts, the busy cultivation of others, the desert-like desolation of certain spots, and the soft, calm monotony of seemingly interminable trees which was to be found in different tracts—rendered the forest of Hallate one of the most interesting and changeful scenes through which the wandering foot of man could rove. Whether he sought the city or the hermitage, whether the grave or the gay, whether the sun or the shade, here he might suit his taste; and the mutations of the sky, in winter, in summer, in

morning, in evening, in sunshine, or in clouds, added new changes to each individual spot, and varied still farther a scene which in itself seemed endless in its variety.

About three o'clock on the afternoon of a day in early May, with a cool wind stirring the air, and some light vapours floating across the heaven, a gentleman, completely armed except the head, with a lance on his shoulder, and a page carrying his casque behind him, rode slowly into one of the wide savannahs, following a peasant with a staff in his hand, who seemed to be showing him the way. His horse bore evident signs of having been ridden far that day, without much time for grooms to do their office in smoothing down his dark brown coat; but nevertheless, though somewhat rough and dusty, the stout beast seemed no way tired; and, to judge by his quick and glancing eye, his bending crest, and the eager rounding of his knee, as if eager to put forth his speed, one would have supposed that he had rested since his journey, and tasted his share of corn.

"Ay, there is a piqueur of the hunt," said the gentleman, marking with a glance a man, clothed in green and brown, who stood holding a brace of tall dogs at the angle of one of the roads leading into the heart of the forest. "You have led us right, good fellow. There is your guerdon."

The peasant took the money; and, as it was somewhat more than had been promised, made a low rude bow and stumped away; and the gentleman, turning to his page, beckoned him up.

"Think you, Will, that you have French enough," he asked, in English, when the boy was close to him, "to tell them where we are, and what to do?"

"Oh, I will make them understand," replied the page, with all the confidence of youth. "I picked up a few words in Ghent, and a few more as we came along; and what tongue wont do, hand and head must."

"Well, give me the casque," said his master, "and you take my barret;" and receiving the *chapel de fer* from the boy's hands, he placed it on his head, raised the visor till it rested against the crest, and rode slowly on towards the attendant of the chase, who, with all a sportsman's eagerness, was watching down the avenue attentively.

"Good morning, my friend," said the gentleman in French.

"Good afternoon, sir," answered the piqueur; for the vulgar are always very careful to be exact in their time of day. He did not look round, however, and the stranger went on to inquire if the King were not hunting in the forest.

The man now turned and eyed the questioner. His splendid arms showed he was a gentleman; and he was alone, so that no treason could be intended. "Yes, sir," replied the piqueur; "I expect him this way every minute. Do you want to see him?"

"Why, not exactly," said the stranger. "Some of the people told me the good Duke of Burgundy was with him; and, as it is he with whom I want to speak, if their report be true, it may save me a ride to Paris."

"The good Duke is with the King," rejoined the man; "but s'life I know not whether he will be so long: for fortune alters favour, they say, and times have changed of late —though it is no business of mine, and so I say nothing; but the Duke was ever a friend to the Commons, and to the citizens of Paris more than all."

"Have they had good sport to-day?" demanded Richard of Woodville; for doubtless the reader has already discovered one of the interlocutors in this dialogue. "'Tis somewhat late in the year, is it not, piqueur?"

"Ay that it is, for sundry kinds of game," replied the man; "but there are some not out, and others just coming in; and we are obliged to suit ourselves to the poor old King's health. He is free just now from his black sickness, and would have had a glorious day of it, had not Achille, the subveneur, who is always wrong, and always knows better than any one else, mistaken which way the *piste* lay. But hark! they are blowing the death: the beast has been killed, and not past this way, foul fall him. My dogs have not had breath to-day."

"Then they will not come hither, I suppose?" said Richard of Woodville.

"Oh, yes! 'tis a thousand chances to one they will," answered the man. "If they force another beast, they must quit that ground, and cross the road to Senlis; and if they return with what they have got, they must take the Paris avenue, so that in either case they will come here."

While he spoke, there was a vast howling of dogs, and blowing of horns at some distance; and Woodville, trusting to the piqueur's sagacity for the direction the Court would take, waited patiently till the sounds accompanying the *curée* were over, and then gazed down the avenue. In about ten minutes some horsemen began to appear in the road; and then a splendid party issued forth from one of the side alleys, followed by a confused crowd of men, horses, and dogs. They came forward at an easy pace, and Richard of

Woodville inquired of his companion, which was the Duke of Burgundy.

"What, do you not know him?" said the man, in some surprise. "Well, keep back, and I will tell you when they are near."

The young Englishman, without reply, reined back his horse for a step or two, so as to take up a position beyond the projecting corner of the wood; and, while the piqueur continued gazing down the avenue, still holding his dogs in the leash, Woodville turned a hasty glance behind him, to see if he could discover anything of his page. The boy was nearer than he thought, but was wisely coming round the back of the savannah, where the turf was soft and somewhat moist, so that his approach escaped both the eyes and ears of the royal attendant, till, approaching his master's side, he said something which, though spoken in a low tone, made the man turn round. At the same moment, however, the first two horsemen passed out of the road into the open space; and immediately after, the principal party appeared.

At its head, a step before any of the rest, came a man, seemingly past the middle age, with grey hair and a noble presence, but with cheeks channelled and withered, more by sickness and care than years. His eye was peculiarly clear and fine, and not a trace was to be seen therein of that fatal malady which devoured more than one-half of his days. His aspect, indeed, was that of a person of high intellect; and though his shoulders were somewhat bowed, and his seat upon his horse not very firm, there were remains of the great beauty of form and dignity of carriage, which had distinguished the unhappy Charles in earlier days.

Close behind the King came a youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age, with a fine, but somewhat fierce and haughty countenance, a cheek colourless and bare, and a bright but haggard eye; and near him rode a somewhat younger lad, of a fresher and more healthy complexion, round whose lip there played ever and anon a gay and wanton smile. Almost on a line with these, were three or four gentlemen, one far advanced in years, and one very young; while the personage nearest the spot where Richard of Woodville sat, seemed still in the lusty prime of manhood, stout but not fat, broad in the shoulders, long in the limbs, though not much above the middle height. He was dressed in high boots, and long striped hose of blue and red, with a close-fitting pourpoint of blue, and a long mantle, with furred sleeves, hanging down to his stirrups. On his head

he bore a cap of fine cloth, shaped somewhat like an Indian turban, with a large and splendid ruby in the front, and a feather drooping over his left ear. His carriage was princely and frank, his eye clear and steadfast, and about his lip there was a firm and resolute expression, which well suited the countenance of one who had acquired the name of John the Bold.

"If that be not the Duke of Burgundy," said Richard of Woodville, to the piqueur, in a low tone, as the party advanced, "I am much mistaken."

"Yes, yes," replied the man, nodding his head, "that is he, God bless him!—and that is the Duke of Aquitaine, the King's son, just before him. Then there is the Duke of Bavaria on the other side——"

The young Englishman did not wait to hear enumerated the names of all the personages of the royal train, but, as soon as the King himself had passed, rode up at once to the Duke of Burgundy, who turned round and gazed at him with some surprise, while the young pale Duke of Aquitaine bent his brow, frowning upon him with an inquiring yet ill-satisfied look.

"My lord the Duke," said Woodville, tendering the letter he had received from De Roucq, "I bear you this from Flanders."

The Duke took it, and, without checking his horse, but merely throwing the bridle over his arm, opened the letter, and looked at the contents. "Ha!" he exclaimed, as he read—"Ha! I thank you, sir;" and, making a sign for Richard and his page to follow, he spurred on, and passed the two young Princes to the side of the King.

"This gentleman, Sire," he said, displaying the letter, "brings me troublous tidings from my poor county of Flanders, which call for my immediate presence; and, therefore, though unwilling to leave you, royal sir, at a time when my enemies are strong in your capital and court, I must even take my leave in haste; but I will return with all convenient speed."

The King had drawn his bridle, and, turning round, gazed from the Duke to Richard of Woodville, with a look of hesitation; but, after a moment's pause, he answered, with a cold and constrained air, "Well, Duke of Burgundy, if it must be so, go. A fair journey to you, cousin;" and without farther adieu, he gave a glance to his sons, and rode on.

The Duke of Burgundy bowed low, and held in his horse while the royal party passed on, exchanging no very placable

looks with the young Duke of Aquitaine, his son-in-law, and giving a sign to four or five gentlemen who were following in the rear, but immediately fell out of the train, and ranged themselves around him.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the Prince, turning to Woodville, while the King and his court proceeded slowly towards a distant part of the savannah, and, by the movements of different gentlemen round the Duke of Aquitaine, there seemed to be some hurried consultation going on.

"An English gentleman, my lord, attached to the Count, your son," replied Woodville, without farther explanation; but seeing that a number of men completely armed, who followed the principal body of courtiers, had been beckoned up, he added, "Methinks, fair sir, there is not much time to lose. Yonder is the way—I am not alone." Without reply, the Duke gave one quick glance towards the royal party, set spurs to his horse, and rode quickly along the road to which Woodville pointed. He had hardly quitted the savannah, and entered the long broad avenue, however, when the sound of a horse's feet at the full gallop came behind, and a voice exclaimed, "My lord, my lord the Duke! the King has some words for your ear."

It was a single cavalier who approached; but the quick ear of Richard of Woodville caught the sound of other horse following, though the angle of the wood cut off the view of the royal train.

"Good faith," answered the Duke, turning his head towards the messenger, but without stopping, "they must be kept for another moment. My business will have no delay." But, even as he spoke, he caught sight of a number of men-at-arms following the first, and just entering the alley in a confused and scattered line.

"But you must, my lord!" exclaimed the gentleman who had just come up. "I have orders to use force."

The Duke and his attendants laid their hands upon their swords; but Woodville raised his lance high above his head, and shook it in the air, shouting, "Ho, there!—Ho! Ride on, my lord, ride on! I will stay them."

"Now, gold spurs for a good lance!" cried the Duke of Burgundy; "but I will not let you fight alone, my friend;" and, wheeling his horse, he formed his little troop across the road.

"Ho, there! Ho!" shouted Woodville again; and instantly he heard a horn answering from the wood. "The first man is mine, my lord," he cried, setting his lance in the rest and

drawing down his visor. "Fall back upon our friends behind: you are unarmed!" and, spurring on his charger at full speed, he passed the King's messenger, (who was only habited in the garments of the chase,) towards a man-at-arms, who was coming at full speed some fifty yards in advance of the party sent to arrest the Duke. His adversary instantly charged his lance likewise; no explanation was needed; and the two cavaliers met in full shock between the parties. The spear of the Frenchman struck right on Woodville's cuirass, and broke it into splinters; but the lance-head of the young Englishman caught his opponent on the gorget, and, without wavering in his seat, he bore him back over the croup to the ground. Then, wheeling rapidly, he galloped back to the Duke's side; while, at a brisk pace, but in perfect order, his band came up under the young Lord of Lens; and the English archers, springing to the ground, put their arrows to the strings and drew the bows to the ear, waiting for the signal to let fly the unerring shaft.

"Hold! hold!" cried the Duke. "Gallantly done, noble sir!—you have saved me; but let us not shed blood unnecessarily;" and, casting his eye over Woodville's troop, he added, "We outnumber them far; they will never dare attack us."

As he spoke, the men-at-arms of France paused in their advance, and some of the foremost, dismounting from their horses, raised the overthrown cavalier from the ground, and were seen unlacing his casque. At the same time, the gentleman who had first followed the Duke of Burgundy began quietly retreating towards his friends, and though the Duke called to him aloud to stop, showed no disposition to comply.

"Shall I bring him back, noble Duke?" exclaimed the young Lord of Lens, eager to win some renown.

"Yes, ride after him, young sir," said John the Bold.

"Remember, he is unarmed," cried Richard of Woodville, seeing the youth couch his lance, and fearing that he might forget, in his enthusiasm, the usages of war.

"You are of a right chivalrous spirit, sir," said the Duke, turning to the young Englishman. "Do you know, my Lord of Viefville, who is that gentleman, whom he unhorsed just now?"

"The Count de Vaudemont, I think," replied the nobleman to whom he spoke. "I saw him at the head of the men-at-arms in the forest."

"Oh, yes, it is he," rejoined another. "Did you not see the cross crosslets on his housings?"

"A good knight and stout cavalier as ever couched a lance," observed the Duke of Burgundy. "The young kestrel has caught the hawk," he continued, as the Lord of Lens, riding up to him of whom he had been in pursuit, brought him back apparently unwillingly towards the Burgundian party.

"Ah! my good Lord of Vertus," exclaimed John the Bold, "you have gone back with half your message. Fie! never look white, man! We will not hurt you, though we have strong hands amongst us, as you have just seen. Offer my humble duty to the King, and tell him that I should at once have obeyed his royal mandate to return, but that my affairs are very urgent, and that I knew not how long I might be detained to hear his royal will."

"And what am I to say to our lord?" asked the Count de Vertus, "for Monsieur de Vaudemont, his son's bosom friend, overthrown by your people, and well-nigh killed, I fear?"

"My daughter ought to be his son's bosom friend," replied the Duke, sharply, "but she is not, it seems; and as to Monsieur de Vaudemont, perhaps you had better tell the King that he was riding too fast and had a fall: it will be more to his credit than if you say, that he met a squire of Burgundy in fair and even course, and was unhorsed like a clumsy page; and now, my Lord of Vertus, I give you the good time of day. You said something about force just now; but methinks you will forget it; and so will I."

Thus saying, the Duke turned his horse and rode away down the avenue; the English archers sprang upon their steeds again; and Richard of Woodville, beckoning the young Lord of Lens to halt, caused his whole troop to file off before him, and then with his companion brought up the extreme rear. A number of the French men-at-arms followed at a respectful disatnce, till the party entered the village of Fleurines, in the forest; but there, having satisfied themselves that there was no greater body of the men of Burgundy in the neighbourhood—which might have rendered the King's journey back to Paris somewhat dangerous—they halted and retired.

The Duke had turned round to watch their proceedings more than once; nor did he take any farther notice of Richard of Woodville till the French party were gone. When they were no longer in sight, however, he called him to his side, and questioned him regarding himself.

"I do not remember you about my son, fair sir," he said,

"and I am not one to forget men who act as you have done to-day."

"I have been in your territories, my Lord Duke, but a short time," replied Richard of Woodville. "As I came seeking occasions of honour to the most chivalrous court in Europe, and as I was furnished with letters from my Sovereign to yourself, and to your son, vouching graciously for my faith, the Count was kindly pleased to give me a share in anything that was to be done to-day. Happening to be in the saddle this morning somewhat before the rest of the Lord of Roucq's troop, and my horses being somewhat fresher, the good old knight sent me on, thinking you might need aid before you reached the rendezvous you had given him."

"Ay, he judged right," replied the Duke; "and had I known as much, when I wrote to him, as I learned yesterday, I would have had him at the gates of Paris; for my escape at all has been a miracle. They only put off arresting me or stabbing me in my hotel till the King returned from this hunting, in order to guard against a rising of the citizens. Have you this letter from King Henry about you?"

"My page has it in his wallet, noble Duke," replied the young Englishman. "Will you please to see it?"

John nodded his head, and, calling up the boy, Richard of Woodville took the letter from him, and placed it in the Prince's hands. The Duke opened and read it with a smile; then, turning to Woodville, he said, "You justify the praises of your King, and his request shall be attended to by me, as in duty bound. Men look to him, sir, with eyes of expectation, and have a foresight of great deeds to come. His friendship is dear to me; and every one he is pleased to send shall have honour at my hands for his sake. Ah! there is Pont St. Maxence, and the bright Oise. De Roucq is, probably, there by this time."

"I doubt it not, my lord," answered Richard of Woodville; "he could not be far behind."

"Who is that youth," demanded the Duke, "who seems your second in the band?"

"One of your own vassals, noble sir," replied the English gentleman, "full of honour and zeal for your service, who will some day make an excellent soldier. He is the young Lord of Lens."

"Ah!" said the Duke in a sorrowful tone, "I have bad news for him. His uncle Charles is a prisoner in Paris, taken out of my very house before my eyes; and I doubt much they will do him to death. Break it to him calmly this

evening, sir. But see! here are several of good old De Roucq's party looking out for us. Methinks he would not have heard bad tidings of his Duke without riding to rescue him."

Thus saying he spurred on, meeting, ere he reached Pont St. Maxence, one or two small bodies of men-at-arms, who saluted him as he passed, shouting "Burgundy! Burgundy!" and fell in behind the band of Richard of Woodville. The single street of the small town was crowded with people; and before the doors of the two inns which the place then possessed was seen the company of the Lord of Roucq, with the men dismounted, feeding their horses, but all armed, and prepared to spring into the saddle at a moment's notice.

The approach of the Duke was greeted by a loud shout of welcome—not alone from his own soldiers, but also from the people of the town; for in the northern and eastern provinces of France, as well as in the capital, John the Bold was the most popular prince of the time. De Roucq immediately advanced on foot to hold his stirrup, but his Lord grasped him by the hand and wrung it hard, saying, "I am safe, you see, old friend—thanks to your care, and this young gentleman's conduct."

"Ay, I thought he would do well," replied the old soldier, "for he is up in the morning early."

"He *has* done well," said the Duke, dismounting; and, turning to Woodville, who had sprung from his horse, he said, "You rightly deserve some honour at my hands. Though we have no spurs ready, I will dub you now; and we will arm you afterwards at Lille. Kneel down."

Richard of Woodville bent his knee to the ground before the crowd that had gathered round; and, drawing his sword, the Duke of Burgundy addressed to him, as usual, a short speech on the duties of chivalry, concluding with the words —"thus remember, that this honour is not alone a reward for deeds past, but an encouragement to deeds in future. It is a bond as well as a distinction, by which you are held to right the wronged—to defend the oppressed—to govern yourself discreetly—to serve your Sovereign Lord—and to be the friend and protector of women, children, and the weak and powerless. Let your lance be the first in the fight; let your purse be open to the poor and needy; let your shield be the shelter of the widow and orphan; and let your sword be ever drawn in the cause of your King, your country and your religion. In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I dub you knight. Be loyal, true, and valiant."

At each of the last words he struck him a light stroke with the blade of his sword upon the neck; and the crowd around, well pleased with every piece of representation, uttered a loud acclamation as the young knight rose; and the Duke took him in his arms, and embraced him warmly. Old De Roucq, and the noblemen who had accompanied John the Bold from the forest, grasped the young Englishman's hand one by one; and the Duke, turning to the Lord of Lens, added, with a gracious smile, "I trust to do the same for you, young sir, ere long. In the meanwhile, that you may have occasion to win your chivalry, I name you one of my squires; and, by God's grace, you will not be long without something to do."

The youth kissed his hand joyfully; and the Duke retired to the inn. Richard of Woodville paused for a moment to distribute some handfulls of money amongst the crowd, who were crying "Largesse" around, and then followed the old Lord of Roucq, to give him information of all that had taken place in the forest of Hallate, before they proceeded together to receive the farther orders of the Duke of Burgundy.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SUMMARY.

All was bustle and activity throughout Flanders and Burgundy after the return of John the Bold from Paris. Night and day messengers were crossing the country from one town to another, and every castle in the land saw gatherings of men-at-arms and archers; while, across the frontier from France, came multitudes of the discontented vassals of Charles VI., pouring in to offer either service or council to the great feudatory, who was now almost in open warfare, if not against his Sovereign, at least against the faction into whose hands that Sovereign (once more relapsed into imbe-

* Some authors, and especially Monstrelet, represent the Duke of Burgundy as effecting his escape from the forest of Villeneuve St. George; but the reader of course cannot entertain the slightest doubt that the author of the present veracious history is, like all other modern historians and critics, better acquainted with the events of distant times than the poor ignorant people who lived in them.

cility) had fallen. If, however, the country in general was agitated, much more so was the city of Lille, where the Duke prolonged his residence for some weeks. There, day after day, councils were held in the castle; and day after day, not only from every part of the Duke's vast territories, but also from neighbouring states, came crowds of his friends and allies. The people of Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres sent their deputies; the Duke of Brabant, the Bishop of Liege, the Count of Cleves, appeared in person; and even the Constable of France, Waleran, Count of St. Paul, took his seat at the table of the Duke of Burgundy, and refused boldly to give up his staff to the envoys sent from Paris to demand it. The cloud of war was evidently gathering thick and black; and foreign princes looked eagerly on to see how and when the struggle would commence; but the eyes of both contending parties were turned anxiously to one of the neighbouring sovereigns, who was destined to take a great part, as all foresaw, in the domestic feuds of France. To Henry of England both addressed themselves, and each strove hard not only to propitiate the monarch, but to gain the good will of the nation. All Englishmen, either in France or Burgundy, were courted and favoured by those high in place; and Richard of Woodville was now especially marked out for honour by both the Duke of Burgundy and the young Count of Charolois. The latter opened his frank and generous heart towards one, with whose whole demeanour he had been struck and pleased from the first; and that intimacy which grows up so rapidly in troublous times, easily ripened into friendship in the daily intercourse which took place between them. They were constant companions; and more than once, after nightfall, Richard was brought by the prince to his father's private cabinet, where consultations were held between them, not only on matters of war and military discipline—for which the young English knight had acquired a high reputation, on the report of the old Lord of Roucq—but also on subjects connected with the policy of the English Court, regarding which the Duke strove to gain some better information from the frank and sincere character of Woodville than he could obtain elsewhere. But, as we have shown, Richard of Woodville could be cautious as well as candid; and he replied guardedly to all open questions, that he knew naught of the views or intentions of his Sovereign; but that he was well aware Henry of England held in high esteem and love his princely cousin of Burgundy, and would never be found wanting, when required, to show him acts of

friendship. Farther, he said, the Duke must apply to good Sir Philip de Morgan, a man well instructed, he believed, in all the King's purposes.

Both the Count of Charolois and his father smiled at this answer, and turned a meaning look upon each other.

"You have shown me, Sir Richard," said the Duke, "that you really do not know the King's mind on such subjects. Sir Philip de Morgan was his father's most trusted envoy; but is his own envoy not the most trusted? It is strange, your monarch's conduct in some things. He has added to his agents at our poor Court, a noble and wise man whom his father hated."

"Because, my most redoubted lord," replied the young knight, "he judges differently, and is differently situated from his father. Henry IV. snatched the crown, as all men know, from a weak and vicious king, but found that those, who once had been his peers, were not willing to be his subjects. Though a mighty, wise, and politic prince, his life was a struggle, in which he might win victories indeed, and subdue enemies in the field, but he raised up new traitors in his own heart, new enemies within himself—I mean, my lord, jealousies and animosities. Our present King comes to the throne by succession; and his father has left him a crown divested of half its thorns. His nurture has been different too: never having suffered oppression, he has nothing to retaliate; never having struggled with foes, he has no fear of enmity. People say in my land, that one man builds a house and another dwells in it. So is it with every one who wins a throne; he has to raise and strengthen the fabric of his power, only to leave the perfect structure to another."

The Duke leaned his head upon his hand, and thought profoundly. Ambitious visions, often roused by the very name of Henry IV., were reproved by the moral of his life; and though John the Bold might not part with them, he turned his thoughts to other channels, and strove to learn from Richard of Woodville the character and disposition of the English sovereign, if not his intentions and designs. On those points, the young knight was more open and unreserved. He painted the monarch as he really was, laughed when the Prince spoke of his youthful wildness, and said, "It was but a masking face, noble Duke, put on for sport, and, like a mummer's vizard, laid aside the moment it suited him to resume himself again. Those who judge the King from such traits as these will find themselves wofully deceived;" and

he went on to paint Henry's energies of mind in terms which —though the Duke might attribute part of the praise to young enthusiasm—still left a very altered impression on the hearer's mind in regard to the real character of the English King.

I have said that these interviews took place more than once, and also that they generally took place in private; for the Duke did not wish to excite any jealousy in his Burgundian subjects; but, on more than one occasion, several of the foreign noblemen who had flocked to the Court of Lille were present, and between the Count of St. Paul and Woodville some intimacy speedily sprung up. The Count, irritated by what he thought injustice, revolved many schemes of daring resistance to the Court of France. He thought of raising men, and, as the ally of Burgundy, opposing in arms the Armagnac faction and the Dauphin; he thought of visiting England, and treating on his own part with Henry V.; and from the young English knight he strove to gain both information and assistance. There was in that distinguished nobleman many qualities which commanded esteem, and Woodville willingly gave him what advice he could; and yet he tried to dissuade him from being the first to raise the standard of revolt, pointing out that, although the state of mind of the King of France, and the absence of all legal authority in those who ruled, might justify a Prince so nearly allied to the royal family as the Duke of Burgundy, in struggling for a share of that power which he saw misused, especially as he was a sovereign Prince, though feudatory for some of his territories to the crown of France, yet an inferior person could hardly take arms on his own account without incurring a charge of treason, which might fall heavily on his head if the Duke found cause ultimately to abstain from war.

The Count listened to his reasons, and seemed to ponder upon them; and though no one loves to be persuaded from the course to which passion prompts, he was sufficiently experienced to think well of one who would give such advice, however unpalatable at the moment.

Thus passed nearly a month from the day on which the young Englishman quitted Ghent; and so changeful and uncertain were the events of the time, that he would not venture to absent himself from the Court of Burgundy even for an hour, lest he should miss the opportunity of winning advancement and renown. In that time, however, he had gained much. He was no longer a stranger. The ways and habits of the Court were familiar to him; he was the companion of all, and the friend of many, who, on his first appear-

ance, had looked upon him with an evil eye; and many an occurrence, trifling compared with the great interests that were moving round, but important to himself, had taken place in the young knight's history. The ceremony of being armed a knight was duly performed, the Duke fulfilling his promise on the first occasion, and completing that which had been but begun at Pont St. Maxence. Yet this very act, gratifying as it was to one eager of honour, was not without producing some anxiety in the mind of the young Englishman. Such events were accompanied with much pageantry, and followed by considerable expense. Hitherto, all his charges had been borne by himself, and he saw his stock of wealth decreasing far more rapidly than he had expected. Though apartments had been assigned to him in the Graevensteen at Ghent, none had been furnished him in the castle of Lille; and no mention was made of reimbursing him for anything he had paid.

One day, however, early in June, he was called to the presence of the Duke, and found him just coming from a conference with the deputies of the good towns of Flanders. The Prince's face was gay and smiling; and as he passed along the gallery towards his private apartments, he exclaimed, turning towards some of his counsellors, "Let no one say I have not good and generous subjects. Ha! Sir Richard," he continued, as his eye fell upon the young Englishman, "go to the chamber of my son—he has something to tell you."

Richard of Woodville hastened to obey; but the Count de Charolois was not in his apartment when he arrived, and some minutes elapsed before the young Prince appeared. When he came at length, however, he was followed by three or four of his men bearing some large bags, apparently of money, which were laid down upon the table in the anteroom.

"Get you gone, boys," said the Count, turning to his pages; "and you, Godfrey, see that all be ready by the hour of noon. Now, my friend," he continued, as soon as the room was clear, "I have news for you, and, I trust, pleasant news too. First, I am for Ghent, and you may accompany me, if you will."

"Right gladly, my lord the Count," replied Richard of Woodville; "for, to say truth, almost all my baggage is still there, and I have scarcely any clothing in which to appear decently at your father's court. I have other matters, too, that I would fain see to in Ghent."

"Some fair lady, now, I will warrant," replied the Count, laughing; "I have marked the ruby ring in your basinet;

but, faith, we have more serious matters in hand than either fine clothes or fair ladies. I go to raise men, sir knight, and you have a commission to do so likewise. My father would fain have you swell your company to fifty archers, taught and disciplined by your own men. The more Englishmen you can get the better, for it seems that you are famous for the bow in your land; but our worthy citizens of Bruges are not unskilful either."

"Good faith, my lord," replied Richard of Woodville, "I know not well how to obey the noble Duke's behest; for my riches are but scanty, and 'tis as much as I can do to maintain my band as it is."

"Ha! are you there, my friend?" said the young Prince, with a smile. "Well, you have borne long and patiently with our poverty; but the good towns have come to our assistance now, and we will acquit our debt. One of these bags is for you, and you will find it contains wherewithal to pay you what you have spent, to reward your archers according to the rate of England, which is, I believe, six sterlings a day, for the month past—to pay them for three months to come, and to raise your band, as I have said, to fifty men. You will find therein one thousand *fleurs-de-lys* of gold, or, as we call them, *franc-à-pieds*, each of which is worth about forty of your sterlings."

"Then there is much more than is needful, my good lord," replied the young knight. "One-half of that sum would suffice."

"Exactly," replied the Count; "but no one serves well the House of Burgundy without guerdon, my good friend. My father knighted you because you had done well in arms, both in England and in his presence; but knighthood is too high and sacred a thing to be made a reward for any personal benefit rendered to a prince. My father would think that he degraded that high order, if he conferred it even for saving him from death or captivity, as you were enabled to do. For that good deed therefore he gives you the rest; and I do trust that ere long you will have the means of winning more."

Richard of Woodville expressed his thanks, though, with the ordinary chivalrous affectation of the day, he denied all merit in what he had done, and made as little of it as possible. There was one difficulty in regard to increasing his band, however, which he had to explain to the young Count, and which arose from the promise he had given his own Sovereign, of holding himself ready to join him at the first summons. But that was speedily obviated, it being agreed that

in case of his services being demanded by King Henry, he should be at liberty to retire with the yeomen who then accompanied him, and that the rest of the troop about to be raised, should, in that case, be placed under the command of any officer the Duke might appoint.

As was then customary, a clerk was called in, and an indenture drawn up, specifying the terms on which the young knight was to serve in the Burgundian force, the number of the men-at-arms and archers which he was to bring into the field, the pay they were to receive, the arms and horses with which they were to appear, and even the Burgundian cloaks, or huques, which they were to wear. A copy was taken and signed by each party; and fortunate it was for Richard of Woodville, that the young Count suggested this precaution. The usual clauses regarding prisoners were added, reserving the persons of kings and princes of the blood from those whom the young knight might put to ransom as his lawful captives; but the Count specifically renounced his right to the third of the winnings of the war, which was not unusually reserved to the great leader with whom any knight or squire took service.

All these points being settled, Richard of Woodville hurried back to the inn, called the Shield of Burgundy, where he and his men were lodged, and prepared to accompany the Count to Ghent. When he returned to the castle, with his men mounted and armed, he found the court-yard full of knights, nobles, and soldiery, all ready to set out at the appointed hour; and for a time he fancied that the young Prince might be going to Ghent with a larger force than the good citizens, jealous of their privileges, would be very willing to receive; but, as soon as the trumpet sounded, and the whole force marched out over the drawbridge into the streets of Lille, the seven or eight hundred men, of which the party consisted, separated into different bands, and each took its own road. One pursued its way towards Amiens, another towards Tournay, another towards Cassel, another towards Bethune, another towards Douay; and the Count and his train, reduced to about a hundred men, rode on in the direction of Ghent, which city they reached about four o'clock upon the following day.

Except the Lord of Croy, between whom and the young Englishman a good deal of intimacy had arisen, the Count de Charolois was accompanied by no other gentleman of knightly rank but Richard of Woodville; and, as that high military station placed him who filled it on a rank with

princes, those two gentlemen were the young Count's principal companions on the road to Ghent, and received from him a fuller intimation of his father's designs and purposes than had been communicated to them before they quitted Lille. All seemed smiling on the fortunes of Richard of Woodville; the path to wealth and renown was open before him, and he might be pardoned for giving way to all the bright visions and glowing expectations of youth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FRIEND ESTRANGED.

Trumpet and timbrel were sounding in the streets of Ghent; the people, in holiday costume, were thronging bridge and market-place; the procession of the trades was once more afoot, with banners displayed; the clergy were hurrying here and there with cross and staff, and all the ensigns of the Romish Church. It was a high holiday; for the young Count had given notice, immediately on his arrival, that he would be ready an hour before compline, which may be considered about six o'clock in the evening, to receive the honourable corps of the good town, in order to return them thanks, in the name of his father, for the liberal aid they had granted him in a time of need; and flushed with loyalty to their Prince—well, I wot, a somewhat unusual occurrence—and with a full sense of their own meritorious sacrifices, each man pressed eagerly to be one of the deputies who were to wait upon the Count; and, if that might not be, to go, at least, as far as the palace gates with those who were to be admitted.

All the nobles who had accompanied the Count from Lille were present in the great hall of the Cours des Princes, where the reception was to take place, except, indeed, Richard of Woodville. He, soon after he had arrived, had begged the Count's excuse for absenting himself from his train; and, hurrying to the inn where he had left Ned Dyram, with his horses and baggage, he dismounted from his charger, and cast off his armour.

To his inquiries for his servant, the host replied, that he had not been there since the morning, and, indeed, seldom appeared there all day; but Woodville seemed to pay little

attention to this answer; and, merely washing the dust from his face and neck, set out at a hurried pace on foot.

He thought that he knew the way to the place which he intended to visit well, though he had only followed it once; and passing on, he was soon out of the stream of people that was still flowing on towards the palace. But he found himself mistaken in regard to his powers of memory; long tortuous streets, totally deserted for the time, lay around him; tall houses, principally built of wood, rose on every side, throwing fantastic shadows across the broad sunshine afforded by the sinking sun; and when he at length stopped a workman to ask his way, the man spoke nothing but Flemish, and all that Woodville had acquired of that tongue was insufficient to make the artisan comprehend what was meant.

Leaving him, the young knight walked on, guided by what he remembered of the direction in which the house of Sir John Grey lay; for it is hardly needful to tell the reader that thither his steps were bent, when suddenly a cavalcade of some five or six horsemen appeared, coming at a slow pace up the street; and the tall graceful figure of a man somewhat past the middle age, but evidently of distinguished rank, was seen at their head. The garb was changed; the whole look and demeanour was different; but even before he could see the features, Richard of Woodville recognised the very man he was seeking, and, hurrying on to meet him, he advanced to his horse's side.

Sir John Grey gazed on him coldly, however, as if he had never seen him before; and Woodville felt somewhat surprised and mortified, not well knowing whether the old knight's memory were really so much shorter than his own, or whether fortune, with Mary's father, had possessed the power it has over so many, to change the aspect of the things around, and blot out the love and gratitude of former days, as things unworthy of remembrance.

"Do you not know me, Sir John Grey?" he asked: "if so, let me recal to your good remembrance Richard of Woodville, who brought you tidings from the King, and also some news of your sweet daughter."

"I know you well, sir," replied the knight; "would I knew less. I hear you have acquired honour and renown in arms. God give you grace to merit more. I must ride on, I fear."

His manner was cold and distant, his brow grave and stern; but Woodville was not one to bear such a change

altogether calmly, though, for his sweet Mary's sake, he laid a strong constraint upon himself.

"I know not, Sir John Grey," he said, "what has produced so strange a change in one, whom I had thought steadfast and firm: whether calmer thought and higher fortunes than those in which I first found you, may have engendered loftier views, or re-awakened slumbering ambition, so that you regret some words you spoke in the first liberal joy of renewed prosperity; but ——"

"Cease, sir, cease!" exclaimed the old knight. "I should indeed regret those words, could they be binding in a case like this. Steadfast and firm I am, and you will find me so; but not loftier views or re-awakened ambition has made the change, but better knowledge of a man I trusted on a fair seeming. But these things are not to be discussed here in the open street, before servants and horseboys. You know your own heart—you know your own actions; and if they do not make you shrink from discussing what may be between you and me—"

"Shrink!" cried Richard of Woodville, vehemently; "Why should I shrink? shrink from discussing aught that I have done. No, by my knighthood! not before all the world, varlets or horseboys, princes or peers: I care not who hears my every action blazoned to the day."

"But I do, sir," replied Sir John Grey; "for the sake of those dear to us both—for your good uncle's sake, and for my child's."

"You are compassionate, Sir John!" said Woodville, bitterly; but then he added, "yet, no; you are deceived. I know not how, or by whom, but there is some error, that is very clear. This I must crave leave to say, that I am fearless of the judgment of mortal man on aught that I have done. Sins have we all to God; but I defy the world to say that I have failed in honour to one man on earth."

"According to that worldly code of honour we once spoke of, perhaps not," replied Sir John Grey.

"According to what fastidious code you will," said the young knight. "I stand here willing, Sir John Grey, to have each word or deed sifted like wheat before a cottage door. I know not your charge, or who it is that brings it; but I will disprove it, whatever it be, when it is clearly stated, and will cram his falsehood down his throat whenever I know his name who makes it."

"Ha, sir! Is it of me you speak?" demanded the knight, somewhat sharply.

"No, Sir John," replied Woodville, "you are to be the judge; for you," he added, with a sorrowful smile, "hold the high prize. But it is of him who has foully calumniated me to you; for that some one has done so I can clearly see; and I would know the charge and the accuser—here, now, on this spot—for I am not one to rest under suspicion, even for an hour."

"You speak boldly, Sir Richard of Woodville," answered Sir John Grey, "and, doubtless, think that you are right, though I may not; for I am one who have long lived in solitude, pondering men's deeds, and weighing them in a nicer balance than the world is wont to use. However, as I said before, this is no place to discuss such things; but as it is right and just that each man should have occasion to defend himself, I will meet you where you will, and when, to tell you what men lay to your charge. If you can then deny it, and disprove it, well. I will not speak more here. See! some one seeks your attention."

"Whatever it is that any man on earth accuses me of," replied the young knight, without attending to Sir John Grey's last words, "I am ready ever to meet boldly, for my heart is free. As you will not give me this relief I ask even now, it cannot be too soon. I will either go with you at once to your own house—"

"No, that must not be," cried the other, hastily.

"Or else," continued Woodville, "I will meet you two hours hence, in the hostel called the Garland, on the market place. What would you, knave?" he added, turning suddenly upon some one who had more than once pulled his sleeve from behind, and beholding Ned Dyram.

"I would speak with you instantly, sir knight," replied Dyram, "on a matter of life and death."

"Shall it be so, sir?" Richard of Woodville continued, looking again to Sir John Grey, who repeated, thoughtfully, "In two hours—"

"Sir, will you listen to me?" exclaimed Dyram, in great agitation. "Indeed you must. There is not a moment to lose. I tell you it will bear no delay. If you would save her life, you must come at once."

"Her life!" cried Woodville, in great surprise. "Whose life? Of whom do you speak, man?"

"Of whom? of Ella Brune, to be sure," replied Dyram. "If you stay talking longer, you leave her to death."

Sir John Grey, with a bitter smile, shook his bridle, and, striking his heel against his horse's flank, rode on.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BETRAYER.

The writer must retread his steps for a while, to show the events which had taken place in the city of Ghent since Ned Dyram and Sir Simeon of Roydon were last seen upon the stage. Whether the reader may think fit to do so or not must depend upon himself. All that the author can promise is, that he will be brief, and merely sketch the conduct of the personages left behind till he brings them up with the rest.

The arrival of Sir Simeon of Roydon in Ghent spread the same terror through the heart of poor Ella Brune that the appearance of a hawk produces in one of the feathered songsters of the bush or clouds. Had Richard of Woodville been there, she would have felt no apprehension; for to him she had accustomed herself to look for protection and support, with that relying confidence, that trust in his power, his wisdom, and his goodness, which perhaps ought never to be placed in man, and which is never so placed but by a heart where love is present. Had she been even in London, her terror would have been less; for even in those days—although they were dark and barbarous, although tumult and riot, civil strife and contention, injustice and wrong would, as we all know, take place in every different country—the peculiar character of the English people, the homely sense of justice and of right, which has been their chief characteristic in all ages, was sufficiently strong to render this island comparatively a land of security. Though there might be persons to oppress and injure, yet there were generally found some kind hearts and generous spirits to support and protect; and in short, there were more defences for those who needed defence than in any state in Europe.

Very different, however, was the case in Ghent, especially for a stranger; and Ella Brune well knew that it was so. She was aware that deeds could be done there boldly and openly, which in England would require cunning concealment and artful device, even for a chance of success; and the consequence was, that she kept herself immured within the walls of her cousin's dwelling, never venturing forth, even to breathe the air, but at night, and striving to make her companionship during the day prove as pleasant as possible to

the worthy dame of Nicholas Brune. To her and to him she communicated the cause of her apprehensions; and it is but justice to the good folks to say, that they entered warmly into her feelings, and did all that they could to mitigate her alarm and give her encouragement. But Ella Brune, in answer to all assurances of safety, constantly replied, that she should never feel secure till Richard of Woodville had returned; and, as it was already beyond the period at which he had promised to be back, she looked for his appearance every day.

From such subjects sprang many a discussion between her and her good cousin, as to her future conduct. "Why, you know, my pretty Ella," he would say, "you could not go wandering after this gay young gentleman, over all the world; mischief would come of it, be you sure. Men are not to be trusted, nor pretty maidens either. We have all our weak moments; and if no harm happen to you, your fair fame would suffer. Men would call you his leman."

"Ay, that is what I fear," answered Ella Brune, "and that only; for though most men are not to be trusted, he is. But at all events," she continued, willing gently to remove all objections to the plan she was determined to pursue, "he might carry me safely with him to Burgundy, or to Liege, as he brought me here."

Nicholas Brune shook his head; and Ella said no more at that time; but gradually she put forward the notion of obviating all difficulties and objections, by assuming some disguise; and on that her good cousin pondered, thinking it a more feasible plan than any other, yet seeing many difficulties.

"As what could you go?" he said. "If at all, it must be in male guise; and though you would make a pretty boy enough, I doubt me they would find you out, fair Ella."

"Why not as a novice of the Black Friars?" demanded Madam Brune, who entered into the maiden's schemes more warmly and enthusiastically than her prudent husband; "then she would have robes longer than her own, to cover her little hands and feet, and a hood to shade her head. There is no punishment either for taking the gown of a novice."

"Then, as this man Dyram must be in the secret," added Ella Brune, "he could give me help and protection in case of need."

"Ah, ha! are you there?" cried Nicholas, laughing. But Ella shook her head, no way abashed, replying, "you are

mistaken, cousin of mine; but perhaps you have so much respect for these holy men, the monks, that you would object to a profane girl, like me, taking their garb upon her?"

"Out upon them, the lazy drones," cried Nicholas Brune; "you may make what sport of them you like for that. I would put them all to hard labour on the dykes, if I had my will;" and he burst forth into a long vituperation of all the monastic orders, in terms somewhat too gross for modern ears, not even sparing the Holy Roman Catholic Church; but ending with another wise shake of the head, and an expression of his firm belief, that the scheme would not do.

Nevertheless, Ella Brune and his good dame were now perfectly agreed upon the subject, and worked together zealously, preparing all that was needful for Ella's disguise, while Ned Dyram brought them daily information of the proceedings of Sir Simeon of Roydon, and made them smile to hear how he had deceived the knight into the belief that Ella was far away from Ghent.

"But if he should discover the truth," said Ella Brune, really anxious that no one should suffer on her account, "may he not revenge himself on you, if you give him the opportunity by going every day and working in gold and silver under his eyes? I beseech you, Master Dyram, run no risk on my account. I would rather endure insult or injury myself, than that you should incur danger."

Ned Dyram's heart beat quick, though Ella said no more to him than she would have said to any one in the same circumstances; but he shook his head with a triumphant air, replying, "He dare not wag his finger against me."

He added no more, but turned to the subject of Ella's disguise, having before this been made acquainted with her project, and being, moreover, eager to second it; for the prospect of having to leave her behind in Ghent, if his young master should be called upon some more distant expedition, had often crossed his mind, producing very unpleasant sensations. Day after day, however, he visited Simeon of Roydon, and generally found him alone. Plenty of work was provided for him; and the payment was prompt and large. Now it was an ornamented bridle that he had to produce, encrusted all over with fanciful work of silver—now a testière or a poitral arabesqued with lines of gold. Sometimes he compounded perfumes or essences, sometimes he illuminated a book of canticles, which the knight intended to present to the monastery.

One morning, however, going somewhat earlier than was his wont, he met the monk, brother Paul, coming down the stairs from the knight's apartments. The cenobite gave him a grim smile, but merely added his benedicite and passed on. Ned Dyram paused and mused before he entered. More than once he had asked himself, what it was that detained Sir Simeon of Roydon so long in Ghent. The Court was absent—there was little to see, and less to gain; and the visit of father Paul gave him fresh matter for reflection. But Ned Dyram was one who, judging by slight indications, always prepared himself against probable results; and he now divined that the discovery of the truth in regard to Ella might not be far off.

He found no change in Simeon of Roydon when he entered, and the morning passed away as usual; but on the following day the knight received him with a smile so mixed in its expression that Dyram felt the hilt of his anelace, and returned him his look with one as doubtful.

"Shut the door, Master Dyram," said Sir Simeon of Roydon.

The man obeyed without the least hesitation; and the knight proceeded, "Think you, fellow, that it is wise and worthy to cheat and to deceive?"

"On proper occasions, and with proper men," replied Ned Dyram, calmly.

"Ah, you do?" cried the knight, with his brow bent; "Then let me tell you that you will deceive me no more."

"That depends upon circumstances and opportunity," answered Ned Dyram, with the same imperturbable effrontery as before. "I dare say you will not give me the means, if you can help it."

"What, if I take from you the opportunity of cheating any one again?" exclaimed Sir Simeon of Roydon. "What if, as you well deserve, I call up my men, and bid them dispose of you as they know how?"

"You will not do that," replied Dyram, without a shade of emotion.

"Why should I not?" demanded the knight, fiercely. "What should stop me? Out of these walls no secrets are likely to pass. Why should I not, I say?"

"Because," said Dyram, in a cool conversation tone, "there is a certain bridge in this city, over the river Lys, where you may have seen, as you pass along, a foolish figure cast in bronze, of two men, one going to cut off the other's head apparently. They represent a son who offered to

execute his father, when, as old legends say—but I do not believe them—the sword flew to splinters in the parricide's hand. However, that has not much to do with the matter, as I see you perceive; but the fact is, that bridge is called the Bridge of the Decapitation—not, as many men fancy, on account of those two statues, but because it is there the citizens of this good town have a pious custom of putting to death knights and nobles, who have had the misfortune to become murderers. Now you must not suppose me so slow witted a man as to come to visit Sir Simeon of Roydon under such peculiar circumstances, without letting those persons know where I am, who may inquire after me if I do not reappear. I am always ready for such cases, noble knight, and to say truth, care little when I go out of the world, so that I have a companion by the way; and that, in this instance, at least, I have secured. 'Tis therefore, I say, you will abandon such vain thoughts."

Sir Simeon of Roydon gazed at him for a moment, with the expression of a fiend; but suddenly his countenance changed, and he fell into deep thought.

What strifes there are in that eternal battle-field, the human heart! What strifes have there not been therein, since the first fell passion entered into man's breast with the words of the serpent tempter—ay, with the words of the tempter; for man had fallen before he ate! But perhaps there is none more frequent, than the struggle between passion and policy in the bosom of the vehement and wily,—none more terrible either; for whichever gains the ascendancy, ruins the country round.

There was something in Dyram's demeanour that suited well with the character of him to whom he spoke. Opposed to him, it first excited wrath; but yet a voice whispered that such a man might be made most useful to his purposes, if he could but be won; and as the knight's anger abated, the question became, how could he be gained? In regard to Ella Brune, Roydon was aware of much that had taken place, but not of all; otherwise his course would have been soon decided. By this time he had learned that Ella had journeyed from England in the train of Richard of Woodville; he knew that Dyram had stayed behind—not dismissed by his master as the man had insinuated, but left in charge of his baggage; and Simeon of Roydon suspected, judging of others by himself, that he had been left in charge of Ella, also, by her paramour. But of Dyram's love for her he had no hint, though there might have arisen in his mind a vague

surmise that such attachment did exist, from the fact which brother Paul had discovered and communicated, that Dyram visited her once at least each day.

That surmise, however, was enough to guide him some way, and after pausing and pondering, till silence became unpleasant, he said, "Perhaps, my good friend, you may be mistaken in what you fancy. No fears of the results you speak of would stay me, were I so minded. Those who have good friends dread no foes."

"That is what I say, sir," replied Ned Dyram, in the same tone; "I have no apprehensions, because I know there are those who will take care of me, or avenge me."

"You need have none," answered Sir Simeon of Roydon; "but not for that cause. There are other regards that would restrain me. You have deceived me, it is true; but you can deceive me no more; and now that I know your motives and your conduct, I think that our ends may not be quite so different as you imagine, and as I too imagined at first."

"Indeed!" said Ned Dyram, with a sarcastic smile. "I know not what your ends are, or what you think you know. Knowledge is a strange thing, noble knight, and those who fancy they know much, often know little."

"True, learned master," answered Simeon of Roydon; "but you shall hear what I know—I wish not to conceal it. Your young lord brought this fair girl to Ghent; then, being called to serve the Duke of Burgundy, left his sweet leman—" he paused upon the word, and saw his companion's visage glow; but Dyram said nothing, and the knight went on; "—left his sweet leman, with his other baggage, under your careful guard. She lives now in the house of one Nicholas Brune; and you see her daily. You love her; and, fancying that I seek her par amours, would fain hide from me where she is. That you see is vain; and I will show you, too, that what you suppose of me is false. I care not for the girl; though perchance I may have thought, in former days, to trifle with her for an hour. But I will tell you more, Dyram: I love not your lord, and I believe that you have no great kindness for him either. Is it not so?"

"All wrong together, puissant knight," replied Ned Dyram, with a laugh. "She is no leman of Richard of Woodville—Sir Richard, by the mass! for I have heard to-day he has been made a knight. Nay, more; he cares no farther for her, than as a boy, who has saved a bird from hawk or raven, loves to nourish and fondle it."

"That may be," answered Sir Simeon, who had now regained all his coolness; "you know more than myself of his doings; but of one thing we are both certain, she loves him; and it would need but his humour to make her his. Of that I have had proof enough before I crossed the sea."

Ned Dyram winced; but he replied boldly, "Because she looked coldly upon you."

"Nay, not so," said the knight; "but on account of signs and tokens not to be mistaken. However, if as you think he loves her not, my scheme falls to the ground."

"And what was that, if I may dare to ask?" demanded Ned Dyram.

"I heed not who knows it," replied Roydon, at once. "I seek revenge, and thought to accomplish it by taking this girl from him. As to what is to follow, I care not. I never seek to see her more; would wed her to a hind, or any one. But if you judge rightly, and he loves her not, I am frustrated in this, and must seek other means."

There was a pause of several minutes; and both thought, or seemed to think, deeply. With Dyram it was really so; though the more shrewd and wise of the two, he had suffered the words of Roydon to fall upon the dangerous weaknesses of his bosom, like a spark into some inflammable mass; and doubt, suspicion, jealousy, were all in a blaze within. Yet he had sufficient power over himself to hide his feelings skilfully, and sought, neither admitting nor denying aught farther, to lead on the knight to speak of his purposes more plainly. But Simeon of Roydon saw there was a struggle, and that was sufficient for his purpose without discovering clearly what it was. He did speak more plainly then, and by many an artful suggestion, and many a promise, sought to lure Dyram on to aid in separating Ella Brune from him who could protect her; concealing carefully that it was on her his thirst of revenge longed to sate itself, though Richard of Woodville was not forgotten either; and before they parted, he thought that he had nearly won him to his wishes. The man did, indeed, hesitate; but the sparks of better feeling, which I have before said he possessed, burned up ere their conversation ended; and a doubt which, even in the midst of passion will rise up in the minds of the cunning and deceitful, that there may ever be a knavish purpose in others, made him desire to see his way more clearly.

All that the knight could gain was a promise that he would consider of his hints; and Dyram left him, with the resolution to draw from Ella Brune, by any means, a knowledge

of her true feelings towards his master, and to watch every movement of Simeon of Roydon with a care that should let not the veriest trifle escape.

In the first object he was frustrated, as before; for the cold despair of Ella's love, its utter unselfishness, its high and lofty nature, was a veil to her heart which the eyes of one so full of human passion as himself could by no art penetrate. But, in his second, he was more successful—with the cunning of a serpent, with the perseverance of a ferret, he examined, he watched, he pursued his purpose. He had already wound himself into the confidence of several of the knight's servants; and he now took every means to gain some hold upon them, which was not indeed difficult, from the character of the men whom Roydon had chosen. Neither did he altogether cease his visits to their master, but, for many days, kept him negotiating as to the price of his services; and, although he could not exactly divine the end that the other proposed to himself, he learned enough to show him that Roydon was sincere, when he assured him that no love for Ella influenced him in seeking to remove her from the protection of Richard of Woodville. He then admitted that he loved her himself, in order to see what the knight would propose; and was not a little surprised to find how eagerly Roydon grasped at the fact, as a means to his own ends.

"Then she may be yours at a word," exclaimed Roydon, grasping his hand as if he had been an equal; "but aid me boldly and skilfully in what I seek, and she shall be placed entirely in your hands—at your mercy—to do with her as you will. Then, if you use not your advantage like a wise and resolute man, it is your own fault."

Dyram mused: the prospect tempted him: the strong passions of his nature rose up, and urged him on; he could not resist them; but still, cunning and cautious, he resolved to make his own position sure, and he replied, "I must first know your motive, noble knight. Men are not so eager without some object. What is it?"

"Revenge!" replied Sir Simeon of Roydon, vehemently, and he said truly; but then he added more calmly the next moment, "I am still unconvinced by what you have said, in regard to the feelings of your master. Though he may seek a higher lady as his wife—and, indeed, I know he does—yet he loves this girl, and will seek her par amours as soon as he has made sufficient way with her; for I persist not in saying that she is his leman. I have been acquainted with him longer

than you have—since his boyhood; and he cannot hide himself from me as from others. At all events, that is my affair: I seek revenge, I tell you; and if I think I shall inflict a heavy blow on him, by making this girl your paramour, and am mistaken, the error will fall on myself. You will gain your ends, if I gain not mine."

"My paramour!" said Ned Dyram, thoughtfully.

"Ay—or your wife, if you will," replied the knight; "but, perchance, she will not, till forced, readily consent to be your wife—you understand me. I will give you every surety you may demand, that she shall remain wholly in your power. The course you follow afterwards must be of your own choosing."

The great tempter himself could not have chosen better words to work his purpose. It seemed, as if by instinct, that the one base man addressed himself to all that was weak in the other's nature; and there is a kind of divination between men of similar characters, which leads them to foresee, with almost unerring certainty, the effect of particular inducements upon their fellows.

Gradually, Dyram yielded more and more, resolving firmly all the while to do nothing, to aid in nothing, without insuring that his own objects also were attained; but, in the execution of such schemes, there are always small oversights. Passion so frequently interferes with prudence—the stream grows so much stronger as we are hurried on, that it is scarcely possible to stop when we would; and, when once the knave or the fool puts power into the hands of another, his own course is as much beyond his direction as that of a charioteer who would guide wild horses with packthread. How strange it is—perhaps the most wonderful of all moral phenomena—that any man should trust another in the commission of a bad action!

The question between Sir Simeon of Roydon and his lowlier companion speedily reduced itself to how Ella Brune was to be separated from those who could afford her protection; but the knight soon pointed out a means, instructed as he was by another, who kept himself in the dark.

"These people," he said, "with whom she resides, are known to be the followers of a new sect of heretics, which has sprung up in a distant part of Germany, and is similar to our own Lollards, only their apostle is named Huss, instead of Wickliffe. The girl herself is more than suspected of favouring these false doctrines. Such things are matters of no moment in your eyes or mine; but the zealous priest-

hood, fearful for their shaken power, are resolute to put such blasphemous notions down; and, if you can but discover when these Brunes go to one of their assemblies, which are kept profoundly secret, we can ensure that they shall be arrested. The girl, then left alone, shall be placed at your disposal. If she will fly with you from Ghent, for fear of being implicated, well. If not, on your bringing me the information, you shall have a sufficient sum of money to hire unscrupulous friends, and carry her whithersoever you will."

"But if she should accompany them to their assembly," said Ned Dyram at once, "how shall I ensure that she is not thrown into prison, tortured, perhaps burnt at the stake? No, no—that will never do!"

"All those ifs can be met right easily," answered Simeon of Roydon. "Ere you give any information, you can exact a promise from brother Paul—"

"A promise from brother Paul!" exclaimed Dyram, with a mocking laugh; "what! trust the promise of a monk! You are jesting, sir knight. Was there ever promise so sacred, sworn at the altar on the body of our Lord, that they have not found excuse for breaking or means of evading? Do you judge me a fool, Sir Simeon of Roydon?"

"Not so," rejoined the knight, "the danger did not strike me; but I see it now. It must be obviated, or I cannot expect you to go along with me. Yet—let me consider—methinks it were easily guarded against. Perchance she may not go; but, if she do, you can go with the party, take what number of men with you you like, and, in the confusion that must ensue, rescue your fair maiden. The gates, at this time of night, are not shut till ten; horses may be ready; and there is a castle, some five leagues off, on the road to Bruges, which I saw and cheapened three days since, as a place of residence during my exile. It is vacant now: you can bear her thither. To-morrow you can speak with father Paul yourself, and make your own terms as to leading him to the place of their meeting, if you discover it."

"No," replied Ned Dyram, "no! I will not go with him. I will be at their meeting with men I can trust; so can I be sure that I shall be near at hand to guard her. I will have it under his hand, too, that I am authorized by him to go; or, perchance, they may burn me likewise."

"You are too suspicious, my good friend," cried the knight, with a laugh that rang not quite so merrily as it might have done.

"A monk! a monk!" answered Dyram; "one can never

doubt a monk too much. I will gain the intelligence wanted, sir knight; but I leave you to prepare this brother Paul to grant me all the security I ask, or he hears not a word from me; and so, good night!—you shall have news of me soon:" and, thus saying, he left him.

Simeon of Roydon bent down his head, and thought for several minutes; but at length he exclaimed, biting his lip, "He will shear down my revenge to a half—and yet, perhaps, that may be as bitter as death. To be the minion of a varlet!—'Twill be a fiercer, though a slower fire, than that of fagot and stake."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HUSSITES.

In a large old house, built almost entirely of wood, and situated in one of the suburbs of Ghent, far removed from all the noise and bustle of the more frequented parts of that busy town, there was a large old hall, in former years employed as a place of meeting by the linen weavers; but which, at the time I speak of, had been long disused for that purpose, when, the trade becoming more flourishing, its followers had built themselves a more splendid structure in the heart of the city.

In this hall were assembled, at a late hour of the day, about fifty personages of both sexes, and apparently of various grades and professions. Some were dressed in rather gay habiliments, some in staid and sober costume, but fine and costly withal, and some in the garb of the common artizans. The greater number, however, seemed of a wealthy class; but all appeared to know each other; and the rich citizen spoke in brotherly fellowship to the poor mechanic, the well-dressed burgher's wife nodded with friendly looks to the daughter of her husband's workman. There was one part of the hall, indeed, in which, for a moment, there was a momentary bustle caused by a beautiful girl in a mourning garb, of somewhat foreign fashion, expressing apparently a wish to quit the hall; but it was soon quieted; and a minute or two after, a tall, elderly man, with white hair, stood up at the end of a long table, having some books laid upon it, while

the rest of the assembly sat on benches round, at some little distance, leaving a vacant space in the midst.

After pausing for a minute or two till all was silent, the old man began to speak, addressing his companions in a fine, mellow tone, and with a mild, persuasive air.

"My brethren!" he said, in the Flemish tongue, "although I be an ignorant man and not meet to deal with such high matters, you have permitted me to expound to you the opinions of wiser men than myself, and especially of the venerable John Huss, upon things that nearly touch the salvation of all; and on former occasions, I have shown you cause to see that very many corruptions and abominations have, by the wickedness of men, been brought into the Church of Christ. Amongst other points on which we have all agreed, there are these principal ones; that the word of God, first preached by the lowly and the humble to the poor and ignorant, should be laid open to all men, and committed to their own keeping, not being made to be put under a bed or hidden in a bushel, but to be a light shining in darkness, and leading every one in the way of salvation: that the Bible is no more the book of the priests than the book of the people, but is the property of all for the security of their souls. Secondly, we have agreed that there is but one mediator with God the Father, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that to worship, or invoke, or kneel down to even good and holy men departed, whom we are wont to call saints, is a gross idolatry, as well as the worship of statues, figures, or cross pieces of wood and stone; there being nothing that can save us, but faith in our Redeemer, and no intercession available but his; for, surely, it is a folly to suppose that men, who were sinners like ourselves, have power to help or save others when they have need of the one atonement for their own salvation. Thirdly, we have held, that in the mass there is no sacrifice, Christ having entered in once for all; and that to suppose that any man, by the imposition of a bishop's hands, receives power to change mere bread and wine into the substance of our Lord's body and blood, is a fond and foolish imagination devised by wicked priests for their own purposes. These were the points touched upon when last we met; and now, before we proceed farther, let us pray for grace to help us in our examination."

Thus saying, he knelt down at the end of the table—and all the rest, but one, followed his example, turning, and bending the knee by the benches around. The Hussite teacher raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and then, in a

loud tone, uttered a somewhat long prayer, followed by the voices of his little congregation.

It was by this time growing somewhat dusk, for the sun must have been half way below the horizon; and the windows of the hall were narrow and far up; but nevertheless, when the kneelers raised themselves again at the conclusion of the prayer, and turned round towards the teacher, the eyes of all were fixed on one spot at the end of the table, and a universal cry burst from every lip. With some it seemed to be the sound of terror, with others that of rage and surprise; and well, indeed, might they feel astonished, for there, exactly opposite the old man who had led them in prayer, stood a figure frightful to behold, covered with long black shaggy hair, with two large horns upon its head, a pair of wings on its shoulders, swarthy and ribbed like those of a bat, and with the face, apparently, of a negro.*

Hardly had they time to recover from their surprise, and to ask themselves what was the meaning of the apparition they beheld, when the doors of the hall burst open, and a mixed multitude rushed in, consisting of monks and priests, and the whole train of varlets and serving men which, in that day, were attached to monasteries, chapters, and other religious institutions in great towns. Staves and swords were plenty amongst them; and, with loud shouts of "Ah, the heretics! Ah, the blasphemers! Ah, the worshippers of Satan!" they rushed on the unhappy Hussites, overpowering them by numbers. No resistance was made; in consternation and alarm, the unhappy seekers of a purer faith rushed towards the doors, and even the windows, in the hope of making their escape. But the attempt was vain; one after another they were caught by their furious enemies, while cries of triumph and savage satisfaction rose up from different parts of the hall, as captive after captive was seized and pinioned.

"We have caught you in the fact," cried one.

"You shall blaspheme no more!" shouted another.

"I saw the arch enemy in the midst of them!" added a third.

"They were in the act of worshipping the devil!" said brother Paul.

"To the stake with them, to the stake with them!" roared a barefooted friar.

* It may be necessary to remark that the incident here mentioned is not imaginary, but a recorded historical fact, most disgraceful to those who played the treacherous juggle.

"You see what you have done," said Ella Brune to her cousin, who stood near with his arms tied. "This was very wrong of you, Nicholas."

"It was," answered Nicholas Brune, in a sorrowful tone; "but they can do no harm to you; for I and others can testify that you came, unknowing whither, and would have left us, if we had allowed you."

"Will they believe your testimony?" asked Ella, in a tone of deep despondency.

Before he could answer, brother Paul approached, and gazing at the fair unhappy girl with a malicious smile, he said, "Ah, ah, fair maiden, I knew your hypocrisy would be detected at length. I did not forget having seen you with the heretics at Liege."

Even as he spoke, however, there was a bustle at the door; and to the surprise of all the hall contained, a number of men completely armed appeared, having at their head a gentleman in the ordinary riding dress of the day, with the knightly spurs over his boots, and two long feathers in his cap.

"Stand there," he said in a loud voice, turning to the men who followed, "and let no one forth". Then striding through the hall with the multitude of priests and monks scattering before him, he advanced, gazing from right to left, till he reached the spot where Ella Brune was standing. A low murmur of joy burst from the poor girl's lips as Richard of Woodville approached; and she would fain have held out her hands towards him, but that her delicate wrists were tied with a hard cord.

Richard of Woodville gazed from her to father Paul, who stood beside her, with a stern brow; and then, in a low, but menacing voice, exclaimed, "Untie that cord, foul monk!"

"I will not," answered Father Paul, sullenly. "Who are you, that you should interrupt the course of justice, and rescue a blasphemous heretic from the stake?"

"Thou liest, knave!" answered Richard of Woodville. "She is a better Catholic than thou art, with all thy hypocritical grimaces;" and unsheathing his dagger, he cut the cord from Ella's wrist, and set her free.

"Ah, he draws his knife upon us!" cried father Paul. "Upon him! Cleave him down. Are there no brave men here?"

A rush was instantly made towards Richard of Woodville; and one man, with a guisarme, thrust himself right in his way; but laughing loud, the young knight bared his long,

heavy sword, and waved it over his head, grasping Ella by the hand, and exclaiming in English, "On, my men! on! open a way, there!"

All but the most resolute of his opponents scattered from his path; and his stout followers forced their way forward into the hall, showing some reverence for the priests and monks, it is true; but striking the varlets and serving-men sundry heavy blows with the pommels of the swords, not easily to be forgotten. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued; the darkness of the hall was becoming every moment more profound—a number of the Hussites made their escape, and untied others; while still, through the midst of the crowd, Richard of Woodville slowly advanced towards the door, and knocking the guisarme out of the hand of one of the men who seemed most strongly bent on opposing his passage, he brought the point of his sword to his throat, exclaiming, "Back, or die!"

The sturdy varlet laid his hand upon his dagger; but, at the same moment, one of the English archers who had reached his side, struck him on the jaws with his steel glove, and knocked him reeling back amongst the crowd. Quickening his pace, Richard of Woodville hurried on, still holding Ella by the hand, and soon reached the top of the narrow stairs. There pausing at the door, he counted the number of his men, who had closed in behind him, to see that none were left, and then hastened down with his fair charge into the street, several other fugitive Hussites passing him as they fled with all the speed of terror.

As soon as they had reached the open road, the young Englishman turned to his followers, and ordered three of them to remain a step or two behind, to ensure that they were not taken by surprise, and to give notice if they were pursued. But the party of fanatic priests within were busy enough, in the wild riotous scene presented by the hall, now in almost total darkness, and often mistook one man for another in endeavouring to secure the prisoners that still remained in their hands. Thus Woodville and his companions were suffered to proceed on their way unfollowed, through numerous long and narrow streets, till they reached the inn where they had first alighted on their arrival in Ghent.

"Quick," cried Richard of Woodville to one of his attendants. "Saddle four horses and the mule; and you with Peter and Alfred be ready to set out. You must leave Ghent with all speed, my poor Ella," he continued, leading her into the inn. "I cannot go with you myself, but

you shall hear from me soon, and the men will take care of you."

"I must go first to my cousin's house," said Ella, eagerly. "'Twill not take long to run thither and return. There are many things that I must take with me."

"You can pass round there as you go," replied Woodville; "less time will be lost, and there is none to spare. Here, host," he cried. "Host, I say!" But the host was not to be found; and one of the chamberlains, running up as the young knight and his followers stood under the arch, demanded, "What's your will, sir?"

"At what time are the city gates closed?" asked Richard of Woodville. "I have to levy men at Bruges for the service of the Duke, and must send some of my people on to-night."

"They do not shut till ten, sir, in this time of peace," replied the chamberlain; "so you have more than an hour; but even after that, an order from the cyndic will open them."

"That will do," replied Richard of Woodville; "they must set out at once."

A moment after, the horses were brought round, with the mule which Ella Brune had ridden from Nieuport, and placing her carefully thereon, the young knight gave some orders to his men in a low tone, added some money for their expenses, and with a kindly adieu to Ella, saw them depart. He then directed two of his archers to superintend the immediate removal of his baggage to the apartments which had been assigned him in the Graevensteen, to see to the care of the horses, and to rejoin him without loss of time. After which, followed by the rest of his attendants, he took his way back to the old castle of the counts of Flanders, and sought the chamber in the basement of one of the towers, which had been pointed out for his own by the Count of Charolois.

At the door stood a stout man-at-arms, whom Woodville had placed there that night after his meeting with Sir John Grey; for it may be necessary to mention here, what we did not pause to notice before, that the young knight had returned with Dyram to the Graevensteen to seek for his men, as soon as he heard of the danger which menaced poor Ella Brune.

Opening the door of the chamber, Richard of Woodville went in, and found Dyram seated at the table with his head leaning on his arms. He moved but slightly when his master entered, and Woodville, casting himself into a seat

opposite, gazed at him for a moment with a stern and angry brow.

"Look up, sir," he said at length; "in your terror and haste to remedy the evil you have caused, you have spoken too much not to speak more. You once boasted of telling truth. Tell it now, as the only means of escaping punishment."

"Is she saved?" asked Ned Dyram, raising his head, and gazing in his young master's face with a look of eager anxiety. "Is she saved? I care for nought else."

"Yes, she is saved," replied Richard of Woodville; "but with peril to her, and peril to me. I found her with her hands tied; and what may be the result, no one yet can tell. And so you love her!" he continued, gazing upon him thoughtfully. "A glorious means, indeed, to prove your love!"

"I have been deceived," said Dyram; "the villain cheated me. He promised that she should be mine; and when I told him of the day and hour when the assembly was to take place, thinking that I kept the power in my own hands, so long as I did not mention where they were to meet, they laughed me to scorn, and told me they wanted to know no more."

"They!" exclaimed Richard of Woodville. "They! whom do you mean?"

"Brother Paul," replied Dyram, hesitating—"brother Paul and—Well, it matters not, if you learn not from me, you will learn from others; so I will say it first myself—brother Paul and Simeon of Roydon."

"Simeon of Roydon!" exclaimed the young knight, starting up, and lifting his hand as if to strike him; "and have you been villain and traitor enough to betray this poor girl into the hands of that base and pitiful knave? By the Lord that lives, I have a mind to have you scourged through the streets of Ghent, as a warning to all treacherous varlets."

Dyram bent his brows upon him with a bold scowl, answering in a low muttering tone, "You dare not!"

The words had scarcely quitted his lips, when, with a blow on the side of the head, Richard of Woodville dashed him to the ground. The man started up, and drew his dagger half out of the sheath; but his master, who had recovered from his anger the instant the blow was given, so far at least as to be sorry that it had been struck at all, looked at him with a smile of cold contempt, and raising his voice, exclaimed, "Without, there!"

The archer instantly appeared at the door; and, pointing to Dyram, the young knight said, "Take away that knave, and put him forth from the castle, and from the band. He is not one of my own people, and unfit to be with them. He is a base and dishonest traitor, who betrays his trust. Away with him!"

Dyram glared upon him for a moment without moving, then thrust his dagger back into the sheath, raised his hand with the right finger extended, and shook it at Richard of Woodville, with his teeth hard set together, and a significant frown upon his brow. Then turning to the door, he passed the archer, saying, in a menacing tone, "Touch me not," and quitted the room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RESULT.

"Perhaps I have been too harsh," thought Richard of Woodville, when the man Dyram was gone, and he sat alone in his chamber. "Surely that knave's conscience must be punishment enough. What must it be to think that we have betrayed a friend, violated a trust, injured one who has confided in us! Can Hell itself afford an infliction more terrible than such a memory? Methinks it were torment enough for the worst of men, to render remembrance eternal!"

And he was right—surely he was right. In this world we weave the fabric of our punishment with our sins.

As the young knight proceeded to reflect, however, his mind turned from Dyram to Sir Simeon of Roydon; and suddenly a light broke in upon him.—"It must be so!" he cried: "'tis this man has poisoned the mind of Sir John Grey against me. But that will be easily remedied."

The next instant he suddenly recollected the half-made appointment with Mary's father, which in all the bustle and excitement of the scenes he had lately gone through, had escaped his memory till that moment; and he started up, exclaiming, "This is unfortunate, indeed!—There may yet be time—I will go!" But as he turned towards the door, the clock of the castle struck. Nearly an hour had elapsed since the appointed period, for the stealthy foot of Time ever runs fastest when we could wish his stay. Never-

theless' Richard of Woodville went forth, received the password of the guard, and hurried to the inn to inquire whether or not the old knight had come during his absence. He was in some hope that such might not be the case; for Mary's father had ridden away abruptly without saying whether he accepted the appointment or not. But when Woodville reached the hostel he found, to his mortification, that Sir John Grey had not only been there, but had waited some time for his return, and had gone away, the host informed him, with a gloomy brow.

Sad and desponding, with all the bright hopes which had accompanied him into Ghent darkened, he strode back to the Graevensteen, and passed through the court to his apartments, remarking that there seemed a number of persons waiting, and a good deal of confusion, unusual at so late an hour; but his thoughts were busy with his own situation; and he walked on in the darkness to his chamber, without inquiry. There, leaning his head upon his hand beneath the light of the lamp, he gave himself up to bitter reflections, thinking how sad it is, that a man's happiness, his name, fame, purposes, abilities, virtues, should be so completely in the power of circumstances—the stones with which fate builds up the prison walls of many a lofty spirit.

While he was thus meditating, there was a knock at his chamber door, and bidding the applicant come in, the next moment he saw the young Lord of Lens enter. The youth's countenance betokened haste and agitation, and, closing the door carefully, he said, "The Count has just whispered me, to come and warn you, good knight, not to quit your apartments till he comes to you."

"How so?" asked Woodville, partly divining the cause of this injunction. "Do you mean, my young friend, that I am a prisoner?"

"Oh no!" answered the other, "'tis for your own safety. There are enemies of yours in the castle; and perhaps if they were to see you, they might seize you even here. You know not the daring of these men of Ghent, and how, when passion moves them, they set at nought all authority. They would arrest you in the very presence of the Prince, if they thought fit; and they are even now pouring their complaints into the Count's ear. Luckily, however, they know not that you are in the Graevensteen; and, with a show of loyal obedience, of which they have very little in their hearts, they are affecting to ask permission, as you are one of his knights, to have you sought for in the town to-morrow and

apprehended, for something rather rash that you have done this evening."

"I have done nothing rash, my friend," replied Woodville, gravely, "but only what I would do again to-morrow, if the case required it—only, in fact, what my knightly oath required: I have but rescued a defenceless woman from wrong and oppression. I can justify myself easily to the Count or any other gentleman of honour."

"Well, wait till he comes," answered the young nobleman; "for though you might be able to set yourself right at last, yet you would ill brook imprisonment, I wot; and perhaps even the Count might not be able to save you from these people's hands, if you were found just now. They are a furious and unruly set; and the priests have got syndics and magistrates of all kinds on their side."

"I have heard tales of their doings," replied Richard of Woodville; "but I cannot bring myself to fear them. However, I will, of course, obey the Count's commands, and wait here till he is pleased to send for me."

"I will bear you company," replied the young Lord of Lens, "for I love not the presence of these foul citizens; and heaven knows how long they may stay with their orations, as lengthy and as flat as one of their own pieces of cloth."

To say the truth, Richard of Woodville would have preferred to be alone; but he did not choose to mortify the good-humoured young lord by suffering him to perceive that his presence was a restraint; and, sometimes in grave conversation, sometimes in light, they passed nearly an hour; till at length numerous sounds from the court-yard gave notice that the deputation of the good citizens was taking its departure. For half an hour more they waited, in the expectation of soon receiving some messenger from the Count de Charolois, but none appeared; and at length Richard of Woodville besought his companion to seek some intelligence. The young nobleman readily undertook the task, and opened the door to go out; but, on the very threshold, was met by the Count himself, followed by the Lord of Croy. The expression of the Prince's countenance was grave and troubled; and, seating himself, he made a sign to the rest to do so likewise; and then, looking at Woodville with an anxious and careful smile, he said, "This is an awkward business, my friend."

"If told truly, it is a very simple one, my lord the Count," replied the knight.

"It may be simple, yet have very dangerous results," said the young Prince, gravely. "These men of Ghent are not to be meddled with lightly; and, though their insolence must some day be checked—and shall—yet this is not the time to do it. It seems, by their account, that you brought a pretty light-o'-love maiden with you hither from England; and that she having been found, with a number of other heretics, worshipping, they assert, the devil himself, who was seen in proper form amongst them" (Woodville smiled); "you delivered her with the strong hand from the people sent to seize the whole party. What makes you laugh, Sir Richard?"

"Because, my good lord," replied the young knight, "you, here in Flanders, do not seem to understand monks and priests so well as we do in England. They have made a fair story of it, which is almost all false. I am as good a catholic as any of them, though I have not had my head shaved. I believe all that the Church tells me, for I doubt not that the Church knows best; but I can't help seeing that she has got a great number of knaves amongst her ministers."

"But what is the truth of the story, sir knight?" said the Lord of Croy. "I told the Count that I was sure they had made a mountain of a molehill."

"Thanks, my good lord," answered Woodville. "The truth is simply this: the poor girl is a good and sincere catholic, and has been bitterly tried; for many of her relations are what we call Lollards, a sort of heretics like your Hussites, and she has steadfastly resisted all their false notions. She was persecuted and ill-treated in England, by a base and unworthy man—a knight, heaven save the mark!—one Sir Simeon of Roydon, now banished from the English court for his ill-treatment of her. She, having relations in this land—amongst others Nicholas Brune, your goldsmith, sir—quitted London to join them. I found her in the same ship which brought me over; and, in Christian charity and common courtesy, gave her protection on the way. She is no light-o'-love, my lord, but a good and honest maiden; and I would be the last to sully her purity by word or deed. As soon as I reached Ghent, and found out where her cousin dwelt, I placed her safely under his roof, and thought of her no more, accompanying you to Lille. A servant, however, whom I left with my baggage and some spare horses here in Ghent—a clever knave, but a great rogue—was smitten, it seems, by her beauty on the way,

and went often to see her. On my return, while I was speaking with Sir John Grey in the street, this man came up importunately, and told me, if I did not save her, she was lost. Hurrying along with him to gather my men together, I found that a certain monk or friar, named Brother Paul, had combined with others, of whom I have since discovered this Simeon of Roydon was one, to seize upon the poor girl, with the whole party of her friends, at a heretic meeting in the old Linen-weavers' Hall. On their promise to give her up to him, this scoundrel servant of mine, Dyram, had betrayed to the cunning monks at what hour the assembly was to be held; but, when he asked for the securities they had promised, that she should be placed in his hands, they laughed him to scorn. He is a persevering knave, however, and, by one means or another, gained a knowledge of all their proceedings and intentions, and found that they had dressed up one of their varlets as the arch-enemy, covering him with the skin of a black cow, and setting the horns upon his head. This mummer was to be placed under the table in the hall—as doubtless he was, for I saw something of the figure when I went in—and as soon as it grew dusk, he was to rise up amongst the heretics, giving a sign for the others to rush in. Knowing the girl to be a catholic, as I have said, and free from all taint of this heresy—"

"Then why went she thither?" demanded the Count de Charolois.

"She told me afterwards, my lord," replied the young Englishman, "that her cousin Nicholas and his wife had deceived her, and, anxious to convert or pervert her to their own notions, had taken her to this place, without letting her know whither she was going. She says they will acknowledge it themselves, if they are questioned, and also that she strove to go away when she found where she was, but was prevented by them. However, knowing her to be a good catholic, and certain that the whole matter was contrived out of some malice towards her, I had no hesitation in hastening to her deliverance. I used no farther violence than was needful to set her free, took no part in delivering the others, of whose religious notions I knew nothing, and—"

"The greater part of them escaped, it seems," said the Lord of Croy.

"With that I had nothing to do," replied Richard of Woodville. "I contented myself with cutting the cords

they had tied round the poor girl's wrists; and making my way with her out of the hall, leaving the monks and their menée to settle the matter with the others as they thought fit."

"And where is the maiden now, my friend?" asked the Count de Charolois.

"I instantly sent her out of the town with three of my men," replied Richard of Woodville. "I thought it the surest course."

The Count looked at the Lord of Croy, as if for him to speak; and the young English knight, somewhat hastily concluding that they entertained doubts of his word, exclaimed, after a moment's pause, "I trust that you do not disbelieve me, sir? You cannot suppose that an English gentleman, of no ill repute, would tell you a falsehood in a matter such as this?"

"No, no, my friend, no, no," replied the Count, "I do not doubt you for a moment. I only look to our good comrade here, to speak what is very unpleasant for me to say. Indeed, I do not know how to explain it to you; for you will naturally think that my father's power ought to be sufficient to protect one of his own knights against his own people."

"The truth is, Sir Richard," said the Lord of Croy, "that the citizens of Ghent are an unruly race; and if they once get you in their hands, they may treat you ill. If my lord the Count were to resist them, there is no knowing what they might do. I would not answer for it, in such a case, that we should not see them in arms before the castle gate, ere noon to-morrow."

"That shall never be on my account, noble prince, replied the knight, turning to the Count; "but, under these circumstances, it were wise in me to quit the town of Ghent."

"That is exactly what I wish to say," answered the Prince; "but, in truth, it seems most ungrateful of me to propose such a thing to you, my friend. Undoubtedly, if you are not pleased to go, I will defend you here to the best of my power; and my father would soon give us aid, in case of necessity; but I need not tell you, that to have Ghent again in revolt, just on the eve of a new war with the Armagnacs in France, might be ruinous to all his schemes, and fatal to his policy. Moreover, if they were to accuse him of countenancing heresy here, it would do him a bitter injury; for the people in Paris have just pronounced that the

sermon preached by one of his doctors, Jean Petit, is heretical."

"Well," answered Richard of Woodville, "I can go to Bruges, my lord, where you said I should find good archers, and can be carrying on my levies there."

The Count shook his head, saying, "That will be no place of safety. These good folks of Ghent, and those of Bruges, so often at deadliest enmity, are now sworn friends; and the Brugeois would give you up without a thought. No, what I have to propose is this, that you should go an hour or two before daylight to my cousin Waleran de St. Paul, who is now raising troops upon the Meuse. I shall have to pass thither also; for my father sends me into Burgundy, and I cannot go through France. If you will wait for me between Chimay and Dinant, I will join you within ten days, and we will go on to the west, and raise what men we can at Besançon."

"So be it, my noble lord," replied Richard of Woodville; "but where shall I find the Count?"

"You will find him at Chimay," replied the young prince. "He has a castle two leagues thence, on the road to Dinant. From me you shall hear before I come. I will meet you somewhere in the Ardennes. Make all your preparations quickly; and, in the meanwhile, I will write letters to my uncles of Brabant and Liege, that you may have favour and protection as you pass."

Richard of Woodville thanked him for his kindness in due terms, and, as soon as the young Count, with the Lords of Croy and Lens, had left him, called his servants, and gave orders to prepare once more for their immediate departure. Fortunately, it so happened that he had ordered all his baggage to be brought from the inn, so that no great time was lost; and in about an hour all was ready to set out. The letters of the young Count, however, had not arrived, and Richard of Woodville waited, pondering somewhat anxiously upon the only difficulty which presented itself to his mind, namely, how he was to recal the men whom he had sent with Ella Brune upon the side of Bruges, without depriving her of aid and protection at the moment when she most needed it. It was true, he thought, she had no actual claim upon him; it was true that he had done more for her already than might have been expected at his hands, without any motive but that of compassion; but yet he felt that it would be cruel, most cruel, to leave her in an hour of peril, undefended and alone. "We take a withering stick and plant it

in the ground," says Sterne; "and then we water it, because we have planted it;" and Richard of Woodville was one who felt that the kindness he had shown did give her a title to expect more.

At first he thought of bidding the men rejoin him, and bring her with them; but then the glance which Sir John Grey had cast upon him as her name was mentioned, came back to his mind, and he said, "No, that must not be. For her sake and my own, she must go no farther with me. Men might well think, if she did, that there were other ties between us than there are. I will bid them take her to England, or place her anywhere in safety, and then come. To Sir John Grey I must write—and to my sweet Mary also. I may well trust her, I hope, to plead my cause, and repel the charges which this base villain has brought. Yet, 'tis most unfortunate that this event should have occurred at such a moment."

He was still thinking deeply over these matters, when the door opened, and the young Count of Charolois appeared alone. "Here are the letters, my friend," he said. "I have ordered some of my people to go with you for a mile or two beyond the gates, in order to secure you a safe passage. Is there aught I can do for you while you are absent?"

"One thing, my noble lord," replied the young knight, a sudden thought striking him—"if you will kindly undertake to be my advocate with one whose good opinion is to me a matter of no light moment. You must know that Sir John Grey—so long an exile in your father's dominions, but now empowered by King Henry to treat, in conjunction with Sir Philip de Morgan, at the Court of Burgundy—has one daughter, plighted to me by long love, by her own promises, and by her father's also; but some scoundrel—the same, I do verily believe, who has made all this mischief—I mean Sir Simeon of Roydon—has brought charges against me to that good knight, which have altered his countenance towards me. Called suddenly away, I have no means of explanation; and I leave my name blighted in his opinion. The accusation, I believe, refers to this poor girl, Ella Brune; but you may tell Sir John, and I pledge you my knightly word you will tell him true, that there is nought between her and me but kindness rendered on my part to a woman in distress, and gratitude on hers to one who has protected her."

"I will not fail," replied the young prince, giving him his hand, "nor will I lose any time before I explain all as far as I know it." Thus saying, he walked out with Woodville into

the court, where the horses stood prepared; and, in a few minutes, the young wanderer was once more upon his way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRUE LOVE'S DEFENCE.

In one of the best houses in the best part of Ghent, and in a chamber hung with splendid tapestry, and ornamented with rich carvings of dark oak, sat a fair lady, with a bright and happy face—the rounded chin, with its small dimple, resting on a hand as white as marble and as soft as satin. The dark brown eyes, full of cheerful light, were raised towards the gilt roses on the ceiling, as if counting them; but the thoughts of Mary Markham, or, as we must henceforth call her, Mary Grey, were full of other things; and if she was counting anything, it was the minutes, till her father should return from the Cours des Princes, and tell her, who had come back to Ghent with the young Count of Charolois. She was, as the reader knows, of a hopeful disposition—that most bright and blessed of all frames of mind—that lightener of the labours of the world—that smoother of the rough ways of life; and Mary had already hoped that, perchance, when the door opened, and her father's form appeared, another, well loved too, might be beside him; for, on her first arrival, Sir John Grey had spoken to her much of Richard of Woodville, had praised him, as she was proud to hear him praised, and had smiled to see the colour come into her cheek, as if he meant to say, "Fear not, you shall be his."

True, for the last two days he had not mentioned his name; but that, she thought, might be accidental; and now her father did not come so soon as he had promised; but, then, she fancied that this court ceremony might have been long and tedious, or that other business might have detained him after the reception was over.

Minute upon minute passed, however—one hour went by after another—day fled, and night came on—and, after gazing some time upon the flickering fire on the wide hearth, for the evening was somewhat cold, though spring had well nigh made way for summer, Mary rang the little silver bell before her, and bade the servant bring her light to work.

The man obeyed; and when the sconce, protruding through the tapestry by a long gilded arm, was lighted, she said, "Is not my father long?"

"He has been back, lady," replied the man, "but did not dismount, only giving some orders to Hugh, and saying, that if Sir Philip de Morgan came, to tell him he would be here in about two hours."

"How long was that ago?" demanded Mary Grey. The man replied, "More than an hour." And with this intelligence she was forced to rest satisfied. Not long after she heard a step, and her heart beat; but, listening eagerly, she perceived that the sound gave no hope that there were two persons approaching; and with a sigh she plied the busy needle. The next instant her father came in; and, though he kissed her tenderly, with long denied affection, she could see that his face was clouded and somewhat stern.

"I have kept you late from supper, my sweet child," he said; "but I had business which took me away after my visit to the prince."

"Not pleasant business, I fear, noble father," replied Mary, hanging on his arm, "for you look sad."

Sir John Grey gazed on her for a moment or two, with a look of melancholy interest and affection. She had never seen such an expression on his countenance before, but when he had taken leave of her to quit his native land as an exile; and it seemed prophetic of misfortune. "What has happened, my dear father?" she exclaimed; "has any new misfortune befallen you?"

"No," answered Sir John Grey; "and yet I must say yes, too; for that which is sad for you, must be sad for me, Mary."

"He is dead! he is killed!" cried Mary Grey, her sunny cheek growing deadly pale; but her father hastened to relieve her on that score.

"No, Mary," he said, gravely, "he is not dead; but he is unworthy."

The blood rushed up again into her face, as if some one had accused her of a crime; but the next moment she laughed, gaily answering, "No, my father, no! Some one has deceived you. That is impossible. Richard of Woodville cannot be unworthy."

"Alas! my sweet child, 'tis you deceive yourself," replied the knight; "the confidence of love speaks out before you know the facts."

"I know one fact, my father," answered Mary, "which

none can contradict; and which is my answer to all that can be said. For many a long year I have known him. In youth and manhood I have watched him well: and there is not a truer heart on earth. If any one say that his courage has failed in the hour of peril, it is false, my father. If any one say that he has betrayed his friend, it is false. If any one say, that he has deceived, even by word, man or woman, high or low, it is false. If any one say, that he has forgotten his duty, broke his plighted word, wronged his king, his country, you, or me, believe it not, for it is false, my father."

"These are the words of love, my Mary," replied Sir John Grey; "but though I would fain shield that dear bosom through life from every shaft of sorrow, pain, and disappointment, yet, my sweet child, I would rather see you suffer, bitterly though it might be, than regard what I have to tell you of this youth with that light indifference which some might show. He left his native land, Mary, plighted and pledged to you; telling you he went to seek honour for your sake; and yet he brought hither with him a fair leman, to sooth his idle hours with songs and dalliance. Was this worthy, Mary? Nay, doubt it not; for I have it from three several sources; and his own conduct to myself confirms the tale."

He thought to see tears, or at least thoughtful looks; but Mary once more laughed gaily; and holding her father's arm with her fair hand, gazed merrily in his face. "Alas!" she said, "how men are fond of mischief! and what chance can a poor defenceless woman have to escape scandal, when you powerful lords of earth so slander one another? Forgive me, my dear father; but I needs must laugh, to think that any one here, in a foreign land, should take the pains, from pure malignity to my poor knight, to try thus sillily to trouble the peace of Mary Grey, by poisoning her parent's mind against her lover. Poor Ella Brune! little did she think, or little did I think when I bade her go, what evil to her kind and generous benefactor might be done, by her coming with him. I have an antidote to the poison, my dear father; and thanks to that generous candour which made you condescend to tell your child all the plain truth, I can apply it. I know this girl, my father—I know the whole history. I am even art and part in the offence; or rather it is mine, not his. She is my paramour, not Richard's;" and Mary blushed brightly, while even in her laughing eyes a dewy drop of emotion rose up and sparkled, as she defended him she loved.

"Your words are strange, dear one," said the knight; "but let me hear more. Tell me the whole, my child."

"That I will do," replied Mary. "I will tell you the whole tale after supper, and hers is a very sad one. But first, to set your mind fully at ease, let me say, that the only evil thing Richard has done in all this affair, was showing some want of courtesy to the poor girl herself; for when, after having received from him kind and generous protection in her hour of sorrow and of danger, she thought to journey to join her friends in Burgundy, under the safeguard of his little band—Richard, fearing too much what men might say, or perchance, fancying that Mary might be jealous, unkindly refused to take her; and it was I who bade her go, and promised her that, with a free heart, I would let all idle fancies pass me by as evening winds."

"Your love is very confiding, my sweet child," replied the knight.

"And it will never be wronged," said Mary, warmly. "I would not have given it, father, to one unworthy of such trust; and when the confidence ends, the love will end with it. But that will never be."

"Yet, my dear child," answered the knight, gravely, "as I told you I had, in the very first instance, an intimation of this fact from some unknown hand, and then—"

"Some idle mischief-maker," cried Mary, "who chanced to see them on the road, and in his own fancy made the evil he would ascribe to Richard."

"But then comes another, lately arrived from England," continued Sir John Grey; "a gentleman of good repute, who tells the same story with strange exactness, if it be false; and then, when questioned by me, Sir Philip de Morgan says, with a worldly laugh at young men's follies, that he has heard something of it."

"But who was this man from England?" asked Mary, eagerly, "this gentleman of good repute?—I doubt, my father! I doubt!—Methinks I could name him at once."

"Do so, then," replied her father; "I will tell you if you are right."

"Simeon of Roydon," said his daughter; and the knight nodded his assent. "A gentleman of good repute!" cried Mary; "a false and perjured knave, my father! One who has already foully slandered poor Harry Dacre, yet, with a craven cautiousness, has kept himself free from the lance's point; one who dare not, before Richard of Woodville's face, say aught but, that he has heard such reports—that he

vouches not for them—that he mentioned them in thoughtlessness. Out upon the base, ungenerous hound! Why, this very man, for his shameless persecution of this poor girl, and on the bold accusation of good Sir Philip Beauchamp, my second father, is banished from England for two years, and vowed revenge on her and all of us. Had it not been for the King's presence, I believe noble Sir Philip would have crushed him as an earwig or a wasp."

"And is it so?" exclaimed Sir John Grey. "This makes a great change, indeed, my child; for if the teller of a tale be a villain, we may well judge that his story will have some scoundrel object. Nor can I doubt," he continued, with a smile, "that this poor girl, of whom so much has been said, is not what they call her; for, though your eyes might be blinded by love, dear girl, my noble friend Sir Philip is not likely to be affected by any tender self-deceit."

Mary laughed gaily. "That he is not," she said. "Nay, love is with him, my father, but another name for folly. Did I not tell you right, that whoever has assailed the name of Richard of Woodville is a false knave?"

"I trust it may be so," replied her father; "but yet, dear Mary, we must not forget that, long ere this Sir Simeon of Roydon uttered a word, some one unknown wrote to me the self-same tale."

"It was himself, or some one like him," answered Mary Grey.

"It could not be himself," rejoined the knight; "for he was not yet in Flanders when the letter came."

"Is there but one slanderer in the world, dear father?" replied the fair girl, raising her eyes almost reproachfully to her parent's countenance; "and should we even doubt the conduct of one whom for many a long year we have seen walk in truth and honour, because some nameless calumniator breathes a tale against him?"

"We should not," replied Sir John Grey, firmly; "yet such is the world's justice, my child, and such is, I fear, the heart of man—ready to doubt, prone to suspect, and instructed by its own weakness in the weakness of others. However, you have well pleaded your lover's cause, my Mary; and he shall have full and patient hearing to explain whatever yet remains obscure."

"Is there aught obscure?" asked Mary Grey. "To me his whole conduct seems, as it ever has been, light as day."

"Yes," answered the knight; "but yet, Mary, even while I spoke with him to-night—"

"What, is he here?" cried Mary Grey, interrupting him, and clasping her hands with eager joy; "and have you seen him—spoke with him?—How did he look, my father?—Well, but not too happy when he was away from me, I dare to say."

"Well, he certainly seemed," replied her father, with a smile; "and anything but happy, my dear child; but, as I was going to add—even while I spoke with him upon these most serious charges, a man came up and plucked him by the sleeve, beseeching him to come to Ella Brune. His whole countenance changed at the name; and, though he had fixed to meet me within two hours, he failed in his appointment. I waited for him as long as he could decently expect, and then came hither, doubting no longer that the tale was true."

Mary paused thoughtfully, and cast down her eyes; but then a moment after she raised them again with a look of relief, as if she had settled the whole in her own mind. "I will be warrant," she said, "that some great peril has beset our poor Ella, and that he has gone to deliver her: most likely the hateful persecution of this same base man. Nothing else—nothing, I know, would have kept Richard of Woodville away from Mary Grey—if, indeed, he knew that I was here."

"Nay, I must do him justice," answered the knight; "he did not know it, Mary; and perhaps what you suppose is the case, for the man did mention something of danger, and besought him to save her. We will look upon it in as fair a light as may be, and I will send to him early in the morning to bid him come hither and explain. He will then have two advocates instead of one, my child; and I am very ready to be convinced, for I love him for his love to you."

"Can you not send to-night?" whispered Mary Grey, resting her hands upon her father's arm.

"Nay, nay," replied the knight, smiling kindly on her. "It is late to-night, dear girl. To-morrow will do."

Does to-morrow ever do? But seldom; for the hour that is, we can only call our own. All that is to come is in the hands of that dark mysterious fate, which, ruling silent and unseen the acts and wills of men, reserves to itself, in its own dim council-chamber, each purpose unfulfilled, each resolution made and not performed; sporting with chances and with hopes, trampling into dust expectations and designs, and leaving to man but the past for his instruction, and the present for his energies. The word to-morrow should be blotted out from the catalogue. It is what never exists in the form we think to find it; and thus it was with Sir John

Grey. When the morning came he wrote briefly to Richard of Woodville, requesting him to come to him, and making the tone of his epistle more kindly than his words the night before; but it was returned unopened from the Graevensteen, with the tidings that the young knight and all his band had set out on some expedition a few hours after midnight. As she heard the answer, the gay and happy eyes of Mary Grey filled with tears; and her father, gazing on her, reproached himself for having lost the moment that was theirs.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RESCUE.

It was a sultry summer morning, in the midst of July, and there was a dull oppressive weight in the air, although neither mist nor cloud hung upon the lazy wings of a south wind, when an armed party rode through the deep forest of Auvillers, a part of the ancient Ardennes. Road, properly so called, there was none; but yet the way, though somewhat difficult to find for those not accustomed to all the intricacies of the wood, was not difficult to travel; for no care had been taken to plant new trees where old ones had fallen by the stroke of Time or the axe; all had been left to nature; and thus amidst the thick copses and the tall groves of old trees, wide open spaces and long uncovered tracts had spread here and there, over which the soft turf afforded pleasant footing for man or beast. True, the whole district was rocky and mountainous, and without a guide, the wanderer might have found it a wearisome journey in a sultry day, having to climb a high hill in one place, or wind in and out to avoid the long projecting cliffs of slaty stone in another. But for one directed by any persons well acquainted with the track, the journey was far more easy; and by choosing the proper breaks in the forest, and the long spaces which lay midway up the hills, he might ride along for many miles, without having to ascend any mountain, or deviate very greatly from a straight course, on account either of the wood or of the rocks.

Such was the course followed by the party of which I speak, under the direction of a tall powerful man, clothed

from head to heel in steel; for those were not times, nor was that a part of the country in which men of rank and station could travel in safety without being armed in proof. Waleran de St. Paul, indeed, might better have risked his life with scanty arms and few attendants, than any other noble of the day, in that district, for he was well known and generally beloved by the lesser lords around; and his redoubted name rendered it a somewhat fearful task to strive with him, even if taken unprepared; but it would still have been a hazardous experiment, for in those remote and uncultivated tracts, bordering upon several great states, and very uncertain in their attachment to any, numerous bands of wild and lawless men took refuge, and, secure from the arm of justice, lived a life of plunder and oppression, only varied by the mimic warfare of the chase. None of the great nobles in the vicinity—generally engaged in the civil strifes and incessant broils of their own countries—had time to suppress them, even if they had the inclination. But it may well be doubted whether they felt at all disposed to put down, with the strong hand, the troops of roving plunderers which at that time infested the great forests that stretched along the banks of the Meuse and the Moselle; for in those very bands they frequently found a sort of dépôt for brave and determined followers, from which their forces might at any moment be recruited for a short space of time. It is, moreover, whispered that in many instances, the more civilized and polite of the powerful barons round were accustomed to exact a certain share of the plunder from their marauding neighbours, as the price of toleration; and the inferior lords sometimes shared the peril as well as the spoil; and received as welcome guests into their strong castles the leaders of the freebooters, when any accidental reverse of fortune rendered the green wood no longer a secure abode.

Such was the state of the land through which now rode the Lord of St. Paul, still holding the sword, if not the office of Constable of France, with Richard of Woodville by his side, and a train of about forty men-at-arms behind them; so that all peril from their somewhat covetous neighbours of the Ardennes was unthought of by either; and the beauty of the scene, the heat of the day, their approaching meeting with the young Count of Charolois, the state of France, and the probability of speedy deeds of arms, were the subjects of the conversation.

The landscapes, indeed, were most lovely as they proceeded. Beneath, upon the left, sloped down the hill side,

here and there covered with green wood, here and there broken with wild and rugged rocks; but everywhere so much below them, that the eye could generally catch the shining course of the Meuse, wandering on with a thousand sinuosities, and could then roam at large over the wide and varied country on the other side, sometimes reaching distant towns and cities many leagues away, sometimes checked by a bold mountain near at hand. Above rose the hills with their woody garmenture, from which would often start out a high grey cliff of cold slaty stone, sheer up and perpendicular as a wall; or at other times would rise a conical peak, smooth at the sides, or broken into points; and, through many of the gorges that they passed, perched upon isolated hills that seemed inaccessible, were seen the towers and walls of some stern feudal fortress, frowning down the valley, as if prognosticating woe to the traveller who ventured there alone.

Of each of these castles the Lord of St. Paul had some tale or anecdote; and he kindly strove to amuse the mind of his young companion by the way; but though Woodville listened with all due courtesy, ay, and admired the beauty of the land, and answered with a calm and ready mind, yet it was evident his cheerful gaiety was gone, at least for the time, and that his thoughts were pre-occupied by sadder themes, which only spared his attention for a moment, to reply to the words addressed to him, and then recalled it immediately to himself.

"You seem sad, sir knight," said the Lord of St. Paul, at length; "I trust that with the letters from the noble Count, which seemed to me full of all joyance, you received no evil tidings?"

"Tidings most strange, my redoubted lord,"* replied Richard of Woodville; "for while the Count speaks cheerfully of having removed all cause of difference between myself and a noble gentleman, Sir John Grey, on whom my best hopes depend, letters from that knight himself are filled with reproaches undeserved by me, and refuse all explanation or argument."

"That is strange, indeed," said the Count; "what are the dates? One may have been written earlier than the other."

"The dates are the same," answered Richard of Woodville, "and the letters of Sir John Grey, coming by the same

* This term was greatly affected at the period we speak of, not only by kings, but by all powerful nobles.

messenger as those of the Count, might easily have been stopped, had the explanation been given after they were written. It is a dark and misty life we lead in this world; and still, when we think all is clear and bright, as I did when I returned from Lille to Ghent, some thick vapour spreads over the whole, concealing it from our eyes, like the cloud now rolling round the brow of the castle on that high rocky steep."

"We shall have rain," remarked the Lord of St. Paul, "and when it does begin, it will prove a torrent. Here, old Carloman," he continued, turning to one of his men-at-arms, "what does that cloud mean? and where can we best wait for the noble prince, the Count of Charolois, who is to meet us at the Mill Bridge?"

"The cloud means a heavy storm, my lord," replied the old man, riding forward. "Do you not see how the earth gapes for it? But it will not be able to swallow all that will come down, I think. We have not had a drop of rain these two months, and very little dew, so that everything is as parched as pulse. Then, as to waiting for the prince, the meadows by the river would be the best place, if it were not for that cloud."

"Oh, we mind not a little rain," answered the Count of St. Paul; "'twill but make the armourers' fingers ache to take off the rust to-night."

"Ay, 'tis not the rain I am thinking of," said the old man; "but the meadows are no safe resting-place, when there are storms above there. The water gathers in the gulleys, and comes down into the Sormonne, till the old fool can hold no more, and then the whole valley is covered."

"Oh, but if that be the case, we can easily gallop up higher," replied the Count. "There is no shame in running away from a torrent, old Carloman. 'Tis not like turning one's back on the foe."

"Faith that is a foe that gallops quicker than you can," answered the man-at-arms. "The meadow is so narrow, and the bank so high, that you cannot cut across; so you had better stop above, in what we call the Rock Castle, where you can see the country below, and the Mill Bridge and all, without getting in the way of the water. The old Sormonne is a lion, I can tell you, when he is angry; and nothing makes him so fierce as a storm in the hills."

"Well, be it so," answered his lord; "you shall be our governor, good Carloman."

"Then keep up higher, dread sir," replied the man-at-

arms. "See," he added, as they passed a little brook that was running down a narrow ravine, all troubled and red, "it has begun farther to the east already; and it is coming against the wind. That is a sign that it will be furious, though not long-lived."

The Count and his party rode on, somewhat quickening their pace; and though they heard occasionally a distant roar, showing that there was thunder somewhere, no lightning was seen, and the wind still continued blowing faintly from the south-west. The clouds, however, crept over the sky, approaching the sun with their hard leaden edges, and to the north and east, covering the whole expanse with a deep black wall, broken and rugged at its summit, as if higher hills and rocks of slate and marble were rising from the bosom of the mountain scene into the heavens above. Over the deep curtain of vapour, indeed, here and there floated detached, some small paler clouds; and others seemed hurrying up from the south, where all had been hitherto clear, as if drawn by some irresistible power towards the adamant-like mass in the north-east. From one of these as they passed over-head, a few heavy drops fell, but then ceased; and still the sun shone out, as if in scorn of the black enemy that rose towering towards him. A deep stillness, however, fell upon the scene. There is generally in the risen day an unmarked but all pervading sound of busy life, composed of many different noises mingled in the air. According to the season of the year and hour, it varies of course. Sometimes it is full of the song of birds, the voices of the cattle, the hum of insects, the rush of streams, the whispering of the wind, the rustle of the trees, and a thousand other undistinguished sounds to which the ear pays no heed. But when they all or most of them cease, it is strange how we miss the murmur of creation —what a want, what a vacancy there seems! So was it now; and, turning to Richard of Woodville, the Lord of St. Paul remarked, "How silent everything has become!"

"It is generally so before a thunderstorm," answered the young knight. "In my country, we judge whether it will be merely rain or something more by the conduct of the cattle. If after a drought we are going to have refreshing showers, the sheep and oxen seem to hail it with their voices; but if there be lightning coming, everything is silent."

Almost immediately after he had spoken, there was a bright flash, not very near, but dazzling; and some drops fell, while the thunder followed at a long interval. Spurring on, they

rode forward for about two miles farther; and as they went, every little gorge and hollow way had its minor torrent coming down thick and turbulent, though the rain, where the Count and his party were, had not become violent, pattering slowly upon their arms and housings, and spotting the sleek coats of the horses with marks like damascene work. The river, which they were now approaching nearer, might be seen swelling and foaming in its bed, its crowded waters curling in miniature whirlpools along the edge, and rising higher and higher up the bank, as the innumerable tributaries from the mountains poured down continual accessions to the flood.

At length the old man-at-arms exclaimed, "To the right, my lord," and passing through a narrow opening between the great belt of wood, and a small detached portion that ran farther down the hill, they entered a sort of natural amphitheatre crowned with old pines, and carpeted at the bottom of the crags with soft green turf spread over the rugged and undulating surface of ground. Numerous immense masses of rock, however, detached from the hills above, and rolled down in times long passed, started out from the greensward bare and grey; and here and there would rise up a group of old oaks or beeches, while on the stony fragments themselves was often perched an ash or a fir, like a plume in the helmet of a knight.

In front of this amphitheatre the trees sloped away both to the right and left, leaving a wide open space gradually descending the hill, so that from most parts of the Castle of Rocks, as it was called, a considerable portion of the course of the Sormonne might be seen, the nearest point being somewhat less distant than a quarter of a mile. Directly in front was a double wooden bridge spanning over the stream, which was there divided by a low island of very small extent, which served but as a resting-place for the piles of the two bridges, and for a mill, which gave the name to that particular spot. Beyond, on the opposite side of the water, was an undulating plain of several miles in extent, bounded by hills all round, but open to the eye of St. Paul and his party as they stood in the midst of the amphitheatre.

"Is not this the best place now, my lord?" asked old Carloman. "You can not only see here, but you can find shelter, and need not get your arms rusted, or your horses wet, unless you like. There, under the cliff where it hangs over, you can post two-thirds of the men; and as the storm

comes the other way, not a drop will reach them. Then, as for the rest, they can get under this rock in front, where they will be quite dry, if they keep close."

"I will stay here," replied the Count of St. Paul. "You lodge the others, Carloman."

"I will keep you company, my lord," said Richard of Woodville; "and if we dismount, we shall be better able to shelter the horses."

Such was the plan followed; and all the troop, men and horses, were under shelter before the storm became violent. Nor, indeed, did the thunder ever reach that grand and terrible height which it frequently does attain in wood-covered mountains: the rain seemed to drown it; but the deluge which soon fell from the sky was tremendous. In long lines of black and grey it poured straight down, mingled with hail and every now and then crossed by the faint glare of the lightning. The distant country was hidden by the misty veil, and even the nearer scene of the bridge and the mill, the only dwelling in the neighbourhood, grew indistinct.

The Lord of St. Paul and Richard of Woodville endeavoured in vain to descry the plain on the opposite side of the river, in expectation of seeing the train of the Count of Charolois coming from the side of Avesnes. Nothing could they distinguish beyond a hundred yards from the opposite bank; and they mutually expressed a hope that the prince might have been delayed in the more cultivated country to the west, where he would find shelter from the storm.

"He cannot surely be already in the mill?" said the Count: "there seem a great many people at that casement looking up the stream. How many men did he say he would bring, Sir Richard?"

"Two hundred horse," replied Richard of Woodville; "he cannot be there, my good lord; yet there seems a number of heads too. Good heaven! how the stream is rising! 'Tis nearly up to the road-way of the bridge."

"It will be higher than that before it is done, sir knight," observed one of the men-at-arms. "I have seen the bridge carried away twice since I was a boy."

"Here comes a boat down the stream," said Richard of Woodville.

"Ay, we passed one a little way further up," replied the same man who had spoken before; "it has broken away, I dare say."

"That is not a boat," exclaimed the Lord of St. Paul, after gazing for a moment; it is the thatch of a cottage.

Heaven have mercy upon the poor people!" and lifting the cross of his sword to his lips, he kissed it, and muttered a prayer.

At the same moment a number of men, some evidently of inferior rank, and some in garbs which betokened higher station, ran out of the mill; and Woodville could then perceive that, almost close to the door, between the building and the bridge, the water had risen over the low shore of the islet, so as to be up to the knees of those who came forth. He fancied at first that they were about to make their escape over the bridge; but he saw that several of them were armed with long poles; and turning to the man-at arms, who seemed well acquainted with the country, he inquired what they were about to do.

"To draw the broken cottage-roof to the shore, sir knight, I suppose," replied the other, "lest it should damage the bridge."

"See, there comes down a bull!" cried the Count; "how furiously he struggles with the stream.—Ha! they have caught the roof with their hooks. They have got it—no!"

They had indeed obtained for a moment some hold upon the heavy mass of timber and straw that came rushing down, and were dragging it towards the little island; but the stream was increasing so rapidly, and pouring such a body of water upon the land where they stood, that one of the men slipped, and let go his pole, glad enough to be dragged out of the eddy by those behind.

The roof at the same moment swang round and disengaged itself. The bull, still struggling with the torrent, was dashed against the bridge and recoiled. The heavy mass of thatch and wood-work was borne forward upon him with the full force of the stream, and crushed him between itself and the piers. A shrill and horrible cry—something between a roar and a scream, burst from amidst the fierce rushing sound of the overwhelming waters; the whole mass of the floating roof was cast furiously upon the weaker part of the bridge in the centre, already shaken by the torrent; and with an awful crash the whole structure gave way, and was borne in fragments down the stream.

"The flood has reached the mill," said the Count of St. Paul, turning to the man-at-arms; "is there no danger of its being carried away, too?"

"The miller would tell you, none, my dreaded lord," replied the soldier; "but every day is not like to-day; and

what has happened once may happen again. He always says there is no danger, since he put up an image of the blessed Virgin over the door; but I recollect when I was a little boy, and lived at Givet, that island was six feet under water, and where there was a mill in the morning, you could row over in a boat at night. They were all drowned, this man's uncle and all."

"Why are you stripping off your casque and camail, Sir Richard?" asked the Count.

"Because I imagine they may soon want help, my good lord," replied the young knight.

"Madness!" cried the Lord of St. Paul; "no man could swim such a torrent as that."

"I do not know that, noble sir," answered Richard of Woodville; "we are great swimmers in my country, and accustomed to buffet with the waves. But there is a boat higher up. I will first try that, and if that sinks, swimming must serve me."

"I will not suffer it!" exclaimed the Count; "neither boat nor man could live in such a rushing torrent as that."

"Indeed, my good lord, you must," replied the young knight, gravely. "My life is of no great value to myself, or any one, now; and, though I know not who these good folks are, they shall not be lost before my eyes, without an effort on my part to deliver them. See, see!" he cried, "some one waves to us from the window!" and, casting off his corslet, and all his heavy armour, he was hurrying down. But the Count caught him by the arm with a glowing cheek, saying, "Stay, stay, yet a little. They are in no danger yet. The stream may not rise higher."

"But if it does, they are lost," answered Woodville, gently disengaging his arm.

"Then I will go with you," said the Count.

"No, no, my lord!" replied the young knight; "you would but fill the boat, which is small enough. One man is better than a thousand there. If I die, divide my goods amongst my men—send my ring to my sweet lady; and farewell."

Thus saying, he sped on to the very brink of the water, which, instead of decreasing, was still rising rapidly. There, he tried to make the people of the mill hear him, and they shouted from the casement in reply, but the roaring of the torrent drowned their words; and hurrying up to the spot where he had seen the boat moored, he found it, now far out from the actual brink of the stream, swaying backwards and

forwards with the eddies. The top of the post, to which it was attached by a chain, and which, an hour before, had been some yards on shore, was now just visible above the rushing waters; but, wading in, the young knight caught the chain, and drew the boat to him.

It was luckily flat, and somewhat heavy in its build; so that he managed to get in without upsetting it, but not without difficulty. The only implements, however, which he found to guide its course, were one paddle and a large pole with an iron hook, such as he had seen in the hands of the people of the mill. But he had no hesitation,—no fear; and, throwing loose the chain, he guided the boat into the middle of the stream, where, though the current was stronger, the eddies were less frequent. There it was borne forward with terrible rapidity towards what had been the island, but was no longer to be distinguished from the rest of the stream but by the foaming ripple on either side, and the mill rising in the midst.

The bank of the river, on the eastern side, was crowded by his own attendants and the followers of the Count of St. Paul; the windows of the mill, and a little railed platform above the wheel, showed a multitude of anxious faces. No one spoke—no one moved, however, but two stout Englishmen, who were seen upon the shore, stripping off their arms and clothing; while the timbers of the mill, and the posts and stanchions of the platform, quivered and shook with the roaring tide as it whirled, red and furious, past them, lingering in a curling vortex round, as if unwilling to dash on without carrying every obstacle along with it.

Richard of Woodville raised not his eyes to look at those who hung between death and life; he turned not to gaze at his companions on the shore: he knew that every energy, every thought was wanted to accomplish the great object; and, if he suffered his mind to stray, for even a single instant to other things, it was but to think, "I will show those who have belied me that I can risk life, even for beings I do not know!" His eyes were fixed upon one spot, where the boiling of the tide evinced that the ground came near the surface; and there, he determined first to check the furious speed at which he was hurried down the stream. A little farther on, were the strong standards and braces of a mill of those days; and he thought that, if he could break the first rush of the boat at the shallow, he should be able more easily to bring her up under the casements and the platform.

Now guiding with the paddle, now starting up to hold the

boat-pike, he came headlong towards the shoal; but, fending off till the speed of the boat was checked, and she swung round with the torrent and drifted more slowly on, he caught at the thick uprights of the mill with the hook—missed the first—grappled the second; and, though almost thrown over with the shock, held fast till the boat swung heavily round, and struck with her broadside against the building. A rope was instantly thrown from above; and, tying it fast through a ring, which was to be found in the bow of all boats in those days, he relaxed his hold of the woodwork, and the skiff floated farther round.

Then first he looked up; and then first a feeling of deadly terror took possession of him. His cheek grew pale; his lips turned white; and, stretching out his arms, he exclaimed, "Oh, Mary!—oh, my beloved! is it you on whom such peril has fallen?—Quick, quick!" he continued, "lose not a moment. The stream is coming down more and more strong—the building cannot stand. Bear her down quick, Sir John."

"Poo! the building will stand well enough," said a man, in a rude jargon of the French tongue. "'Tis but that people are afraid."

"Fool!" cried Richard of Woodville, who saw the timbers quivering as if shaken by mortal agony: "if you would save your life, come down with the rest."

"Not I," answered the miller, with a laugh; "I have seen as bad floods before now. Here, lady, here—set a foot upon the wheel; it is made fast, and cannot move. Catch her, young gentleman:—nay, not so far, or you will upset the boat—that will do,—there she is;" and Richard of Woodville, receiving Mary Grey in his arms, seated her in the stern of the boat, and again advanced to aid her women and the old knight in descending. Two fair young girls, a young clerk in a black gown, and three armed servants formed the train, and they were the first to take refuge in the boat, leaving their horses behind them. There were three other men remained above, and laughed lightly at the thought of danger; but one young lad, of fifteen years of age, though he too said he would stay, bore a white cheek and a wandering eye.

"Send down the boy, at least," cried Richard of Woodville to the miller; "though you may be fool-hardy, there is no need to sacrifice his life."

"Go, go, Edmé," said the miller; "you are as well there as here. You can do us no good."

The boy hesitated; but the increasing force of water made the mill tremble more violently than ever; and, hurrying on, he sprang into the boat.

"Every one down and motionless!" cried Richard of Woodville, without exchanging even a word with those who were most dear; and, easting off the rope, he steered as well as the paddle would permit towards the bank. But, hurried rapidly forward down the stream, with scarcely any power of direction, he saw that the frail bark must pass the ruined bridge. It was a moment of terrible anxiety, for the eddies showed that the foundations of the piers were left beneath the waters. By impulse, the instinct of great peril, he guided the boat over the most violent gush of the stream, between two of the half-checked whirlpools; and she shot clear down, falling into another vortex below, which carried her completely round twice; and then, broken by the blade of the paddle, let her float away into the stream.

The whole band of the Count of St. Paul were running down by the side of the river; and, as the course of the skiff became more steady, Richard of Woodville turned his eyes towards them. They had got what seemed a rope in their hands; and, ever and anon, one of his own archers held it up, and made signs, as if he would have thrown it, had they been nearer.

"Some one be ready to catch the rope!" cried Woodville, "I cannot quit the steering;" and he guided the boat gently and gradually towards the shore. The young clerk sprang at once into the bow; the women sat still in breathless expectation. Sir John Grey advanced slowly and steadily to aid the youth; and when, at the distance of a few yards, a band, formed of the sword-belts of the troop tightly tied together, was thrown on board, the young man and the old knight caught it, but were pulled down by the shock. Some of the others aided to hold it fast; but, in spite of all Woodville's efforts, the boat swung round, struck the rocky shore violently, and began to fill.

There were now many to aid, however: one after another was supported to the land; and Richard of Woodville springing out the last, caught his sweet Mary to his heart, and blessed the God of all mercies for her preservation in that hour of peril.

As he did so, a faint and distant cry, and a rushing sound, different—very different, either from the roar of the stream or the growling of the thunder, caught the ear. All turned round towards the mill, and gazed. It was gone!—a black

mass floated on the tide, struck against the sunken piers of the fallen bridge, obstructed for a moment the torrent which instantly poured over it in a white cataract, and then, broken into innumerable fragments, rushed past, darkening the red waters. Woodville ran to the brink, and gazed; but no trace of the rash men who had chosen to remain appeared, and their bodies were not found for many days, when they floated to the shore far down the then subsided stream.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RECOMPENCE.

Oh, what a moment it was when, after seeing the wreck of the mill drift by, Richard of Woodville again held Mary Grey to his heart! He cared not who witnessed his emotions, he thought not of the crowd around, he thought not of her father's presence, or of the letter he had received on the preceding night. All he remembered, all he felt, was, that she was saved; and the knowledge of the dreadful death that had just overtaken those who had perished by their own obstinacy, added to the joy of that overpowering feeling, notwithstanding the horror of their fate.

Bearing her rather than leading her, her lover brought Mary to the shelter of the trees; for though the storm had somewhat abated, the rain was still coming down heavily; and there, while the tears poured fast from her beautiful eyes, one or two of the stout English archers, who had known her well at Dunbury, came quietly up and kissed her hand. The Count of St. Paul and his men stood looking on; Sir John Grey gazed upon the lover and the lady with a silent smile; and they themselves spoke not for many minutes, so intense were the emotions of their hearts.

At length, however, after a few low words of explanation with the Count of St. Paul, the old knight advanced to Woodville's side and took his hand, saying, "What, not a word to me, Richard?"

The young knight put his hand to his brow, and gazed at Mary's father in surprise, so different seemed his tone from that of the letter he had received.

"The surprise of seeing you here, noble knight," he

answered, in a confused manner; "the joy of having been brought, as it were, by Heaven's own hand to save this dear lady, when I least expected to meet with her—all confounds me and takes away my words."

"Surprise at seeing us!" repeated Sir John Grey, in a tone of astonishment. "When you least expected to meet with her!—Have you not received my letter by the post of the Count of Charolois?"

"One letter, sir knight, I did receive," replied Woodville; "but it gave me no thought that I should see you here."

The knight gazed at him for an instant, with a look that seemed expressive of doubt as well as wonder. "Here is some mistake," he said. "I trust, my young friend, this catastrophe has not shaken your brain. But one letter have I written, and therein I besought you to meet us at Givet or at Dinant."

Richard of Woodville replied not, but beckoned to his page; and when the boy hurried up, took from him the gibecière which hung over his shoulder. With a hand hasty and agitated, he unfastened the three buttons and loops which closed it, and drew forth a paper, which in silence he placed in the hands of Sir John Grey.

"The knight took it, gazed on the superscription, examined the seal, and then turned to the contents; but instantly exclaimed, as he read, "This is not mine! This is a fraud! I never wrote these words. The outside is from my hand; the seal, too, is seemingly my own; but not one of these harsh terms did I indite."

"Then I thank God!" replied Richard of Woodville, grasping his hand eagerly. "Nay, more, I thank the man who wrote it, though it may seem strange, noble knight. But perchance, had it not been for this and the despair it brought with it, I might have listened to the kind friends who would fain have persuaded me not to risk my life, or, as they thought, to lose it, for men who were strangers to me."

"What, then," cried Mary, rising from the ground on which she had been seated, "did you not recognise us?"

"I knew not when I left the shore," replied Richard of Woodville, "that there was one being on that miserable islet, whom I had ever beheld before. I merit no guerdon, dear one, for saving you, for I knew not what I did."

"A thousand and a thousand thanks, Richard," she answered, laying her fair hand upon his arm; "and far more thanks do I give you, than if you had perilled more to save me knowingly; for by such a deed, done for a mere stranger,

you show my father that his child has not spoken of you falsely."

"Nay, dear Mary, I doubt it not," replied Sir John Grey; "by calumny and malice, all men may be for a time misled; but henceforth, my child, no one shall do him better justice than myself. You judged from acts that you had often seen and known; I had none such to judge by. But should he need defence hereafter, let him appeal to me. This must seem strange to you, my good lord," he continued, turning to the Count of St. Paul; "but we will explain it all hereafter. All, at least, that we can explain—for here is something that we must inquire into as best we may. This letter has been forged for some base end; but by whom, or for what, remains a mystery, though perhaps we may all suspect."

"Everything else seems clear enough," said the Count, with a smile; "though I understand but half you have said, yet I guess well, here has been love, and, as so often happens with love, love's traverses; and, in the end, the happy meed which attends due knightly service to a fair lady. As soon as my noble cousin appears, though by my faith he is somewhat long in coming—"

"I see his train, my lord, or I am blind," said the old man-at-arms, called Carloman. "Do you not perceive a long black line winding on there down from the hills, near a league distant, like a lean serpent?"

"No very sweet comparison for a Prince's train," exclaimed the Count of St. Paul, laughing; "but faith, I see it not. Ah—yes—I catch it now. 'Tis he, 'tis doubtless he. Then when he comes, sir knight, we will on to Charleville, where, having dried our dripping clothes, we will tell the tale of this day's adventure over a pleasant meal: and will inquire how this deceit has taken place. Has yon young novice nought to do with it?" he continued, dropping his voice; "he holds aloof; and though he seems to murmur something to his rosary from time to time, yet, good faith, I put but small trust in the honesty of mumbling friars."

"No, no," replied Mary Grey, with a smile, "I will answer for him."

"Ah, ha!" cried the Count, laughing loud, with the rude jocularity of the day, "look to your lady, Sir Richard, or you may lose her yet. She answers for the honesty of a monk! By my fay, sweet lady, I would rather board John the Bold in his house at Dijon, than do so rash a thing."

"But I can answer for him, too," replied Sir John Grey, gravely; "for, though he be now my clerk, he was not with

me there, and so had no occasion to deceive me, even had he been disposed. But yonder, assuredly, comes the Count. I can see banners and pennons through the dim shower; but how we are to journey on with you to Charleville I hardly know, my good lord: for all but what we have brought in our pouches—horses and clothes and arms, and many a trinket, have gone down in that poor mill."

"I saw no horses in the stream," said Woodville.

"They were in the court on the other side," replied one of Sir John Grey's men; "and it had a stone wall. The water was up to the girths when we got into the second story, and I saw my poor beast, with bended head and open nostrils, snuffing the tide as it rose whirling round him. He soon drowned, I fear."

"'Tis but a league to Charleville, or not much more," said the Count, answering the English knight; "we will dismount some of our men, and make a litter for the lady and her maidens. Hark ye, Peterkin, ride back like light to the castle. In the Florence chamber you will find store of your lady's gear. My good wife is not here, sir knight; but she has left much of her apparel behind, which, though she be somewhat fatter than this fair dame, God wot, will serve to clothe her for the nonce. Ride away fast, boy; bring it to Charleville, and lose no time. Now to build a litter. Lances may serve for more purposes than one; and green boughs be curtains as well as canopies. Quick, my men, quick; let us see if ye be dexterous at such trades."

In about half an hour an advanced party of the Count of Charolois' band approached the bank of the river; but it was still so swollen, that though the Count of St. Paul and the two English knights went down as far as they could, and the rain by this time had well nigh ceased, the distance across, and the roaring of the stream, prevented their voices from being heard at the other side. While they were still striving to make the men comprehend that the bridge had been carried away, and that they must ride farther down the river, the young Count himself and the Lord of Croy, with a number of other knights and noblemen, appeared; and by signs, as words were vain, the Lord of St. Paul explained his meaning to them. He himself with his own party waited for about a quarter of an hour longer, till the hasty litter was prepared for Mary Grey; and then, with some on foot, and some on horseback, they moved on towards the point of rendezvous at Charleville.

It was a happy evening that which they passed in Charle-

ville, for there is nought which so heightens the zest of pleasure as remembered pain; nought that so brightens the sense of security as danger past. All was bustle and confusion in the little town, which was not then fortified; every inn was full, every house was occupied; but it was willing bustle and gay confusion. From one hostel to another, parties were going every moment, and the door of that at which the young Count of Charolois had taken up his quarters, was besieged both by the townspeople and his own friends and followers. The tale of the swollen torrent, and the mill swept away, was told to the noble Prince by the Lord of St. Paul and Sir John Grey; and when Richard of Woodville, who had lingered a little with Mary Grey, appeared, the Count grasped his hand with a generous warmth, which was very winning in one so high, calling him frequently his friend; and then turning to Sir John Grey, he demanded, "Said I not, noble knight, of what stuff he was made?"

"You did him but justice, my good lord," replied the knight; "and I do him full justice now. Well has he won his lady's hand, and he shall have it."

"Come!" cried the Prince, starting up; "I will go offer her my homage, too. But why should we not see the wedding ere we part, Sir John?"

"Nay, nay, my lord," answered the English knight; "I have grown proud with restored prosperity; and my child must go to the altar in my own land, and with my own old followers round me."

Oh, slow age, how tardy is it to yield to the eager haste of youth! But Sir John Grey added words still less pleasant to the ear of Richard of Woodville. "When I return from the Court of the Emperor, my noble Prince," he continued, "I speed back at once to Westminster. I trust that your expedition will then be over; and Sir Richard here may follow me with all speed. Once there, I will not make him wait."

Such was the first intimation Woodville had received of the course that lay before him and Sir John Grey; for the previous moments had passed in words of tenderness with her he loved, and in long, but not uninteresting, explanations with her father. He had hoped that their paths would lie together; and, without inquiring what motive should carry Sir John Grey with the Count of Charolois into the Duchy of Burgundy, he had arrived at the conclusion, that the knight's steps were bent thither as well as his own. It was a bitter disappointment, for imagination in such cases is ever

the handmaid of hope; and Richard of Woodville had fancied that, in the course of the long expedition before them, many an opportunity must occur for urging upon Sir John Grey his petition for Mary's hand. Now, however, they were again about to be separated, with wide lands between them, and with the certainty of months, perhaps years, elapsing ere they met again.

It is strange, it is very strange, and scarcely to be accounted for, that people advanced in life, and experienced in the uncertainty of all life's things, seem to have a confidence in the future which the young do not possess. They delay, they put off without fear or apprehension; they calculate as if with certainty upon the time to come; while eager youth, on the contrary, at the very name of procrastination conjures up every difficulty and obstacle, every change and chance, not alone within the range of probability, but within the reach of fate. Perhaps it is, that the old have acquired a juster appreciation of all mortal joy; perhaps it is, that the keen edge of anticipation being dulled in themselves, they cannot comprehend the impatience of others: that, knowing how little any earthly gratification is really worth, they think it but a small matter, not meriting much thought, whether the hand of the future snatches the desired object from us or not, whether the butterfly, enjoyment, be caught by the boy that chases it, or escape.

So it is, however: Sir John Grey seemed not even to understand or to perceive the pain he was inflicting upon the lover; and, as Woodville knew that it would be of no use to argue, he made up his mind to enjoy the present as much as might be, and then with Mary's love for his guidance and encouragement, to seek honour and advancement in the fields before him.

After a few more words he accompanied the Count of Charolois, with the principal nobles of his train and Sir John Grey, to the hostel where the English knight had taken up his abode; but, as they entered, the eyes of Richard of Woodville fell upon the figure of a poor disconsolate looking boy, who stood near, with his arms folded on his chest, and his eyes bent down upon the ground, without being once lifted to the gay and glittering group that was passing in; and pointing him out to the Lord of St. Paul, the young knight said, "He was one of those saved from the mill, my lord; and, if I mistake not, he is of kin to some of the men who perished."

"Come hither, boy," said the Constable; "who art thou?"

"I am Edmé Mark, my lord," replied the boy, looking up with tearful eyes; "and all my friends are dead."

"Then are you the miller's son?" inquired the Lord of St. Paul.

"No, sir, his nephew," the boy answered, in the jargon of his country.

"Faith, then, we must do something for you," rejoined the nobleman. "Will you ride with me and be my *coustelier*, or with that knight?"

"I would rather go with him," cried the boy, pointing to the young Englishman, "for he saved my life."

"Well, then, take him with you, Sir Richard," said the Lord of St. Paul. "You want to swell your band."

"Good faith, I have need, my lord," answered Richard of Woodville; "for the three men I left behind me when I came from Ghent, have never rejoined me."

"I saw some Englishmen with the Count's train in the court of his hostel," replied the Lord of St. Paul. "I knew them by their flat cuirasses, and their long arrows."

"Ah, I marked them not," answered Richard of Woodville; "but I will go and see.—Come hither with me, boy," he continued; and, followed by the lad, he retrod his steps in haste to the inn where he had found the Count. In the court he saw nothing but Flemings and Burgundians; but in the stables, tending their horses, he found the three men whom he sought, and who now informed him, in the brief and scanty words of the English peasant, that they had escorted Ella Brune to Bruges, and there had left her, she having assured them that she was safe, and required their protection no farther. They had then immediately returned to Ghent; for they had never received the written order which their leader had sent to them; and, having obtained speech of the Count of Charolois, had accompanied him on his expedition, according to his commands. Richard of Woodville mused over this intelligence for some minutes; and then, after placing the boy Edmé in their hands, with orders to take care of him, he hurried back to her he loved.

For three or four days Sir John Grey took advantage of the escort of the Count of Charolois, on his journey towards the Imperial Court, purchasing horses and clothing where he could find them, to supply the place of those lost in the torrent. During that time, as may be supposed, Richard of Woodville was constantly by Mary's side, and it passed happily to both: nor did any incident occur worthy of record here, till they reached the town of Bar, where they

were destined to part. The last conversation that took place between them ere they separated, was in regard to Ella Brune, led on by a half jesting question addressed to Mary by her lover, if she had really never felt jealousy or doubt when so many suspected.

"Neither, Richard," she answered. "I could not suspect you; and besides, I had myself told that poor girl, that I would never doubt or be jealous; and I blamed you to her, Richard, for not taking her, when first she sought to go."

"She seems to have the gift of winning confidence, my Mary," replied the young knight; "and a blessed gift it is."

"'Tis only gained by deserving it, Richard, and not always then," answered Mary Markham: "but one cannot well doubt her, either. When one sees a clear stream flowing on abundantly, we judge that the source is pure; and all her thoughts gush so limpid from the heart, we cannot doubt that heart to be unpolluted too."

"Would that we knew where she is, my Mary," said Richard of Woodville, thoughtfully. "I fear for her much, left in the same land with that base villain, who has so persecuted her, and of whose dark wiles there seems no end."

"She is safe, she is safe," exclaimed the lady; "I have heard of her since she departed. She is safe, and with friends able and willing to protect her, I know; but I fear, indeed, that what you say is true in regard to that traitor, Simeon of Roydon. Do you doubt, Richard, that this forged letter from my father was some contrivance of his?"

"And yet," answered Woodville, "we can by no means trace it to him. The messenger declares he brought the packet as he received it. The Count says he placed your father's and his own together, and gave them to his page, who, in turn, vows he carried them straight to the messenger."

"It is strange, indeed," said Mary; "but as to poor Ella, she is safe; and wherever I am, I will do my best to befriend her, Richard."

They were alone; and he pressed her to his heart with feelings far brighter, far tenderer than mere passion; for beauty is but the expression of excellence; and when we find the substance, oh, how much more deeply we love it than the picture! The fairest features that ever were chiselled by the hand of nature, the sweetest form that ever woke wild emotions in the breast, could never have produced

in the heart of Richard of Woodville, the sensations that he then felt towards Mary Grey.

Ere long they parted; and while she with her father wended on towards the Court of the Emperor—Sir John Grey, acting as a sort of precursor to the more splendid embassy soon after sent by Henry V.—the young knight followed the Count of Charolois to Dijon and Besançon, and aided to raise that force with which John the Bold soon after took the field against the rival faction of Armagnac, then all-powerful in the Court of France.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

Months had passed. The clang of trumpets and timbrels had sounded beneath the walls of Paris, from morning till well nigh vespers; and the clear blue country sky was glowing with the last rays of the sun before he set. But, still the redoubted chivalry of Burgundy, with glittering arms and royal pageantry, stood upon the frosty ground before the gates, the towers of which were crowded with armed men who dared not issue forth to meet their enemies in the field, less because they doubted their own strength—for they were treble at least in number—than because they knew that, within that city, the popular heart beat high to take part with the bold Duke John, "the people's friend."

Faults he had many; crimes of a dark dye he had committed; the blood of the Duke of Orleans was fresh upon his hand; but his princely generosity, his daring courage, and more than all, his love of the Commons, a body grown everywhere already into terrible importance, wiped out all stains in the eyes of the citizens of Paris; and they longed to build up once more the fabric of his power on the ruin of those proud nobles, who, still in their attachment to pure feudal institutions, looked upon the craftsman and the merchant as little better than half emancipated serfs.

Long ere this period, the power of the middle classes had grown into an engine which might be guided, but could not be resisted without danger. In England, its influence had first been recognised by the great De Montford, who had

wisely attempted to direct its young energies in a just and beneficial course; for which the land we live in—nay, perhaps the world—owes him still a deep debt of gratitude. Influenced by the character of the nation, its progress in this country was marked by slow but steady increase of strength; and it went on gaining fresh vigour, more from the natural result of contests between the various institutions which it was destined to supersede, than from its own efforts to extend its sphere. Rebellious nobles looked to it for aid; kings courted its support; usurpers submitted more or less their claims to its approval; and from each and all it obtained concessions. Seldom meeting any severe check—till in long after years, a fatal effort was made to raise an embankment against it, when it burst in a deluge over every obstacle—during the early period of our history it diffused itself calmly, more like the quiet overflowing of the fertilizing rill, than the rush and destructive outbreak of a pent-up torrent. But in France such was not the case, and for ages the struggle to resist it went on; while, partaking of the fierce but desultory and ungoverned activity of the people, it sometimes burst forth, sometimes was driven back, till at length its hour came, and it swept all before it, washing away the seeds of good and evil alike, and leaving behind a new soil for the plough, difficult to labour, and fertile of thorns as well as verdure.

In these middle ages of which I write, few were wise enough to see the existence, and comprehend the inevitable course, of the great latent principle which was destined to take the place of every other. The fact—the truth—that all power is from the people, and that wisdom is the helm which must guide it, was a discovery of after times; and was, moreover, so repugnant to the spirit of the feudal system—that strange, but great ideal—that in the land where feudal institutions were most perfect, the men who owed them all, never dreamed that they could be swept away by the seemingly weak and homely influences which they were accustomed to use at their will: even as our ancestors, not many years ago, little imagined that the vapour which rose from the simmering kettle of the peasant or the mechanic, would one day waft navies through the ocean, and reduce space to nothing.

If there were any in that land of France who, without a foresight of what was to be, merely owned the existence of a great popular power, it was but to use it for their own purposes, ever prepared to check it the moment it had served their object. Some, indeed, in habits of mind and disposi-

tion, were of a character to win its aid by demeanour and conduct, and such was pre-eminently John the Bold. Strange too, to say, that very chivalrous spirit which characterized so many of his actions, won to his side a great body of the nobles without alienating the middle and the lower classes; but it was, that he was more the knight than the feudal baron —more the sovereign than the great lord. It must never be forgotten, in viewing the history of those times, that the original object of the institution of chivalry, was to correct the evils of the feudal system; to strike the rod from the hand of the oppressor, to defend the defenceless, and to right the wronged; and had chivalry remained in its purity, it might have averted long the downfall of the system with which it was linked. The people loved the true knight as much as they hated the feudal lord; and long after the decay of the order, even the affectation of its higher qualities both won regard from the lower classes, and excited the admiration of all those above them, who retained any sparks of the spirit which once animated it.

Thus, the Duke of Burgundy, though surrounded by many of the highest in the land, and possessed of their affection in an extraordinary degree, was popular with the trader in his shop, and the peasant in his cot. Town after town had opened its gates to him as he advanced; and now he stood before the gates of Paris, trusting to the citizens to rise and give him admission. But the love with which he was regarded by the people was as well known to others as to himself, and all chance of a demonstration in his favour had been guarded against with the most scrupulous care. The Dauphin Duke of Aquitaine, whether willingly or unwillingly it is difficult to say, marched through the streets of the capital surrounded by the family of Orleans, and the partizans of Armagnac, and followed by no less than eleven thousand men-at-arms, exhorting the populace in every quarter, by the voice of a herald, to remain tranquil, and resist the suggestions of the agents of the Burgundian faction: "and thus," says one of the historians of the day, "they provided so well for the guard of the town, that no inconvenience occurred."

The walls and gates were covered with soldiery; the heralds and messengers of the Duke were not suffered to approach, though their words were peaceful; and some of the Burgundian nobles who ventured too near, in order to speak with those whom they thought personally friendly, were driven back by arrows and quarrels. Even the kings of arms were threatened with death if they approached within

bow-shot; and, though one was found bold enough to fix the letters of which he was the bearer, on a lance before the gate of St. Anthony, and others contrived to obtain secret admission into the town, to distribute the Duke's proclamation amongst the people, and even affix copies to the gates of the churches and palaces, so strict was watch kept upon the citizens, that a rising was impossible.

Disappointed and angry, but with apparent scorn, the Duke, who had not sufficient forces to render an attack upon the wall successful, even if it had been politic to make it, withdrew to St. Denis at nightfall; and the menacing array disappeared from before Paris, like a pageant that had passed away. The leaders of the troops of Burgundy, separated from those of Flanders and Artois, took up their abode where they had been quartered in the morning, at the hostel called "the Lance," nearly opposite to the abbey; and, while the Duke remained for several hours closeted with some of his oldest councillors, the Lord of Croy drew Richard of Woodville apart from the rest, and whispered that he wished to speak with him alone in his chamber.

The young knight followed him at once; for the intimacy which had arisen between them at Lille, and on the road to Ghent, had ripened into friendship during their long expedition into Burgundy; and without preface, the noble Burgundian exclaimed, as soon as the door was closed, "This will not go forward, Woodville. The Duke, bold as he is, will not strike a stroke against the King's capital, with the King therein. I see it well; and, with this enterprise, passes away my hope of delivering my poor boy John, who lies, as you know, a prisoner at Montl'herry, unless I can take some counsel for his aid."

"Nay, my good lord," replied Richard, with a smile; "doubtless you have taken counsel already, and all I can say is, that if I can aid you, my hand is ready. Can you not march to Montl'herry, and deliver him? The country is clear of men, for every one capable of bearing arms for the enemy, has been gathered into Paris."

"I have thought of it, Woodville," replied the Lord of Croy; "but a large body moving across the country would soon call the foe forth in great numbers; and, moreover, my lord the Duke could ill spare so many men as your band and mine would carry off. But I would give my land of Nuranville to any one who would lead a small party to Montl'herry, and set free the boy, as I have planned it."

"Ah, my lord, I thought your scheme was fixed," said

the young knight, laughing at the circuitous manner in which his friend had announced his wishes. "Let me know what it is, and, as I said before, if I can succour your son, I am ready."

"To say truth, it is the boy's own device," replied the Burgundian; "he has made a friend of the chaplain in the castle, where they hold him; and by this good man's hands I receive letters from him. He tells me that, if a small body of resolute gentlemen, not well known to be of our party, could enter the town and keep themselves quiet therein for one day, he could find means to go forth to mass and escape under their escort. I have chosen out twenty of my surest men; but, as it was needful that they should pass for followers of the Duke of Orleans, I could not send any one to command them who had gained much renown in France, lest he should be known. Thus they want a leader; and where can I find one of sufficient experience, and yet not likely to be recognised, if you refuse me?"

"That will I not, my lord," replied Richard of Woodville; "but I must have the Duke's leave. Who are the men to go with me? I know most of those under your banner."

"Lamont de Launoy," replied the Burgundian, "Villemont de Montebard, whom you know well; and Jean Roussel are amongst them. Then, as for the Duke's leave, that is already gained; for I spoke to him as we marched back to-night; and he himself suggested that you should lead the party, because you speak the French tongue well, and yet your face is unknown in France."

"A work of honour and of friendship shall never find me behind, my lord," replied the young knight; "and I will be ready to mount an hour before daylight; but I must have full command, my lord. Some of your men are turbulent; so school them well to obey; and, in the mean time, I will despatch a letter or two, for good and evil news have reached me here together."

"The good from your fair lady, I can guess," said the Lord of Croy, "for I have heard to-day of her father's journey back through Ghent towards England. The evil is not without remedy, I trust?"

"No, I trust not," replied Woodville; "it comes from a dear friend of mine, Sir Henry Dacre, who writes word that some one has done me harm in the King's opinion, and speaks of letters sent from his Highness long ago, requiring my return, surely delivered, and yet unnoticed and unanswered.

Now, no such letters ever reached my hand; nor can I dream who could have power to wrong me with King Henry; for the only one inclined to do so is a banished man."

"Three times have I remarked a stranger amongst your people, since we were at Charleville," answered the Lord of Croy; "once it was at Besançon, once at Toul, and the other day again at Compiegne. His face is unknown to me, and yet he was talking gaily with your band, as if he were one of them; but he stayed not long; for this last time, I saw him as I passed through the court of the inn, and he was gone when I returned."

"It shall be inquired into," replied Richard of Woodville. "But now I must to these letters, my good lord; and to-morrow, an hour ere daybreak, I will be in the saddle. Pray God give us success, and that I may restore your son to your arms."

The Lord of Croy thanked him as such prompt kindness might well merit, and took his leave; but as soon as he was gone, Richard of Woodville leaned his head upon his hand in thought, and with a somewhat dark and gloomy brow remained in meditation for several minutes.

"What is it makes me so sad?" he asked himself; "it cannot be this empty piece of malice, from some unworthy fool, whose calumnies I can sweep away in a moment, and whose contrivances I can frustrate by a word of plain truth. The King does not believe that I would contemn his commands—in his heart he does not, I am sure! Yet I feel as if some great misfortune hung upon the wings of the coming hours! Perchance I may fall in this very enterprise. Who can tell? Many a man finds his fate in some petty skirmish who has passed through stricken fields unwounded. The lion-hearted Richard himself brought his life safe from Palestine, and a thousand glorious fields—from dangers of all kinds, sufferings, and imprisonment, to lose it before the walls of a pitiful castle scarce bigger than a cottage. Well, what is to be, will be; but I must provide against any event;" and, calling some of his men to speak with him, he told them that he was about to be absent for three days, taking no one with him but his page. He then gave them directions, in case of any mischance befalling him, either to find their way back to England, or to continue to serve with the band of the Lord of Croy; but, at all events, unless specially summoned by the King of England, not to quit the Duke as long as he remained in the field. This done, he turned to his letters, and remained writing till a late hour of the night.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DISASTER.

In the square of the pretty town of Montl'herry, nearly opposite the church, and under the domineering walls of the château, were two hostels, or inns, the one called the Wheatsheaf, and the other the Bunch of Grapes; for, in those days, as in the present time, the houses of public reception were not only more numerous in France than in any country in the world, but were ornamented with signs taken from almost every object under the sun, and from a great many that the sun never shone upon. As every one knows, the little town of Montl'herry is situated on a high isolated and picturesque hill; and down one of the streets running from the *Place* or square, could at that time be seen the rich plain stretching out by Longpont to Plessis-Saint Père, with the numerous roads which cross it in different directions towards Epinay, Ville-aux-bois, and other small towns, as well as the highway towards Paris.

Before these two inns on the morning of a cold but clear day, towards the end of February, were collected some twenty men-at-arms, who had been lodging there from the night before, and who seemed now preparing to ride away upon their farther journey, after the morning meal, then called dinner, should have been discussed. In the meantime, they were undergoing a sort of inspection from their leader, a young man of a tall and powerful frame, and a handsome and engaging countenance, bronzed with the sun and marked with a scar upon his brow. Though he moved easily and gracefully under the weight, he was covered with complete armour from the neck to the heels, which displayed the spurs of knighthood. His casque lay upon the bench at the door of the Wheatsheaf, and leaning negligently against the wall of the inn appeared the lances of the men-at-arms, who each stood beside his horse, while the knight passed from one to another, making some observation to each, sometimes in a tone of reproof, sometimes in words of praise. The host of one of the inns stood before his door observing their proceedings, and some half-a-dozen little boys were spending their idleness in gazing at the glittering soldiery.

Towering above appeared the ancient castle held by the partizans of the Orleans or Armagnac faction; and when it is

remembered that these below were soldiers of the House of Burgundy, and that the young knight at their head was Richard of Woodville, it must be acknowledged that this was a somewhat bold stratagem thus to parade a body of hostile troops in the midst of an enemy's town. The young leader, however, well knew that nothing but the assumption of perfect ease and security could escape suspicion, and confirm the tale which had been told of his band being a party of the men of Orleans.

The gate of the castle he could not see; but from time to time as he passed from one man to another, he looked round to the door of the church, and presently, as the clock struck, he held up his fingers, saying, "What hour is that?" and then as he counted, he turned somewhat sharply to the host, exclaiming, "By the Lord, you have kept us so late for our dinner, that we shall have time to take none. Bring the men out some wine. Quick, my men, quick. On with your bacinets!"

The host assured him that the meal would be served in a minute; but the knight replied, "A minute! Did you not tell me so half an hour ago? Quick, bring out the wine, or we shall be obliged to go without that. What do you think our lord will say, if we wait for your minutes?" and while the host retired to bring the wine, the men assumed their casques, and Richard of Woodville whispered to one who seemed superior to the rest—"He is in the church. I saw him go in with the priest."

"So did I," replied the other; "but he has got a guard with him."

"We must not mind that," replied Woodville; "we shall have some start of them; for they will all be at dinner in the castle—no horses saddled, no armour buckled on. Mount, my men, mount. You can drink in the stirrups. Now, boy, give me my casque."

The page ran and brought the bacinet; the host returned with the wine; and each man drank a deep draught and handed the cup and tankard to his neighbour. Richard of Woodville then sprang into his saddle, his page mounted, and taking the bridle of a spare horse, which was then very generally led after the commander of a party, followed his lord, as, with his lance in his hand, he headed his little troop, and took his way across the Place, saying aloud, as he rode slowly forward, "One prayer to our Lady, and I am with you."

The host gazed after them to the door of the church, but

thought it nothing extraordinary that a young knight should follow so common and laudable a custom as beginning a journey with a petition for protection. When, therefore, Richard of Woodville dismounted with two of his men, and entered the sacred building, he turned himself into his own house again, and applied himself to other affairs. In the meanwhile, the knight strode up the nave, looking around him as he went, while his two companions followed close behind.

Some half dozen women, principally of the lower orders, were the only persons at first visible; but in one of the small chapels, from which the sound of a voice singing mass was heard, they soon after perceived a young gentleman, habited in the garb of peace, kneeling at a little distance from the altar, before which stood a priest in robes, performing the functions of his office.

"That is he," whispered one of the Burgundians to Richard of Woodville, and advancing straight to the young Lord of Croy, the knight took him by the arm, saying, in a low tone, "You are wanted, John of Croy. Where is the guard who was with you?"

"Somewhere in the church, speaking with a woman who was to meet him here," said the young lord, rising. "Perhaps we may get out without his seeing us."

"Never mind if he do," said Richard of Woodville; "we shall be far on the way before they are in the saddle;" and hurrying on with the young Lord of Croy, he reached the door of the church without interruption. The priest could not but see the whole of their proceedings, but he took no notice, going on with the service devoutly.

The clang of the step of armed men, however, had caught another ear; and just as the young Lord of Croy was passing out, a voice was heard exclaiming, "Whither are you going, young sir?"

Richard of Woodville turned his head and replied, "Home!" and then issuing forth, closed the door, and thrust his dagger through the staple that confined the large heavy latch. The horse led by the page was close at hand; and John of Croy, with his deliverers, sprang into the saddle, and rode out of Montl'herry at full speed.*

The precaution of the English knight in fastening the

* It is a strange omission on the part of the historians of the day, that in relating the escape of John of Croy, they have not mentioned the name of Richard of Woodville.

door proved less serviceable than he had hoped, however; for as they passed down the street, he turned and saw the man who had been sent to guard the prisoner—having found exit by some other means—running as fast as he could go towards the castle; and when they reached the foot of the hill, the sound of a trumpet came, borne upon the breeze from above.

On, on, the little party hurried, however; and they had already gained so much ground, that every prospect of escape seemed before them. But unfortunately, no one was well acquainted with the road: Richard of Woodville and his company had found their way thither as best they could; and the young Lord of Croy, who was at the head of the band, while Woodville brought up the rear, turned into a wrong path in the wood near Longpont, so that some time was lost ere they got right again. They were just issuing forth on a road which leads to the left of Lonjumeau, when the sound of pursuit caught the ear; and at the same moment the horse of the page stumbled and fell.

"Up, up, boy!" cried Richard of Woodville, drawing in his rein, as he had nearly trodden the poor youth under his horse's feet; and then adding to those before, "Ride on! ride on!" he stooped and held out his hand to the lad, who staggered up, confused and half stunned with the fall. Before the horse could be raised, and the youth mount, coming round the angle of the wood, by a shorter cut, appeared the pursuers from Montl'herry. The Burgundians had followed the order to ride on, which, had they been the young knight's own band, they might, under the circumstances, have perchance disobeyed. Woodville gazed after them, turned his eyes towards the enemy—the foremost of whom was not more than a hundred yards distant—took one moment for consideration; and then, setting his lance in the rest, he spurred on towards the enemy. The man met him in full career; but, not prepared for such a sudden encounter, was unhorsed in a moment, and the two or three who followed, pulled in the rein. The young knight's object was gained; their pursuit was checked; and the advantage of even a few minutes was everything for the young Lord of Croy.

"Surrender, knight, surrender!" cried the voice of one of the opposite party; but Woodville, though he well knew that such must be the result at last, resolved to struggle for a farther delay; and exclaiming, "What! to half-a-dozen squires? Never! never!" he reined back his horse, as if to take ground

for a fresh career, and again charged his lance which had remained unsplintered, while his page rode up behind, asking, "May I fight too, noble sir?"

"No, boy, no! Keep back!" cried the knight; and at the same moment a more numerous party appeared to the support of the Armagnacs, led by a baron's banner. They bore down straight towards him, some one still calling upon him to surrender; and, seeing that farther resistance was vain, Woodville raised his lance and took off his gauntlet as a sign that he yielded.

"After them, like lightning!" cried the voice of a gentleman in a suit of richly ornamented steel. "A knight is a good exchange for a squire; but we must not let the other escape.—Now, fair sir, do you yield, rescue or no rescue?"

"I do," answered the young knight; "there is my glove, and I give you my faith."

"Pray let us see your face," continued the nobleman, raising his own vizor, while the greater part of his troop rode on after the young Lord of Croy. Richard of Woodville followed his example; but neither was known to the other, though as it afterwards proved they had once met before.

"May I ask your name, fair sir?" demanded the captor, in the courteous tone then used between adversaries.

"Richard of Woodville," replied the young knight; and a smile instantly came upon the countenance of the other, who replied, "A follower of Burgundy, or I mistake. I regret I was not up sooner, good knight; for if the heralds gave me the name truly, I owe you a fall. When last we met, I was neither horsed nor armed for combat properly. The chance might have been different this time."

"Perhaps it might, my Lord the Count," answered Woodville; "fortune is one man's to-day, another's to-morrow. Mine is the turn of ill luck, else had I not been here a prisoner."

"I bear no malice, sir," rejoined the Lord of Vaudemont; "but if you please, we will ride back to Montl'herry; and following the invitation, which was now a command, the young knight accompanied his captor, saying to himself, "I felt that this enterprise would end ill, for me at least."

He knew not how far the evil was to extend.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CAPTIVITY.

Oh, the long and tedious hours of imprisonment! how they weigh down the stoutest heart! How soul and mind seem fettered as well as body; and how the chain grows heavier every hour we wear it! Days and weeks passed by; weeks and months flew away; and, strictly confined to one small chamber in the castle of Montl'herry, Richard of Woodville remained a prisoner.

The Count of Vaudemont, courteous in words, showed himself aught but courteous in deeds. Every tone had been knightly and generous while he stayed in the château; but no results had followed. He would never fix the ransom of his captive; he would never hold out any prospect of liberty; and ere long he departed for Paris, leaving Woodville in the hands of the Châtelain of the place, who, severely blamed for the escape of the young Lord of Croy, revenged himself upon him, by whose aid it had been accomplished. To that one little room, high up in the château, was Woodville restricted; no exercise was permitted to him, but the pacing up and down of its narrow limits: no relaxation but to sing snatches of the old ballads of which he was so fond, or to gaze from under the pointed arch of the window over the changing scene below. No one was permitted to see him but his own page, who had been captured with him, and one of the soldiers of the castle; no book existed within the walls; and materials for writing, purchased with difficulty in the town, were only granted him in order to write to the Lord of Vaudemont concerning his ransom.

At first he remonstrated mildly; but when no other answer arrived, but that the Count would think of it, he took another tone, reproached him for his want of courtesy, and reminded him, that though he had surrendered rescue or no rescue, the refusal of reasonable ransom, justified him in making his escape whenever the opportunity might occur.

The Count's reply consisted of but four words, "Escape if you can," and from that hour the guard kept upon him became more strict than before. The weary hours dragged heavily on. Summer succeeded to spring, and autumn to summer, without anything occurring to cheer the lonely

vacancy of his captivity, but an occasional rumour, brought by the page or the soldier who acted as jailer, either of the great events which were then agitating Europe, or of efforts made for his own liberation. The reports, however, were all vague and uncertain. He heard of war between France and Burgundy, but could with difficulty obtain any means of judging which party had gained the ascendancy. Then he heard of a new peace, as hollow as those which had preceded it; and with that intelligence came the tidings, which the page gained from the soldiers of the garrison, that a large ransom had been offered for him; but whether by the Duke of Burgundy himself, or the Lord of Croy, he could not correctly ascertain. Next came a rumour of dissensions between France and England, and of a probable war; but none of the particulars could be learnt, except that the demands of Henry V. were in the opinion of the Frenchmen extravagant, and that the greater part of the nation looked forward with delight to an opportunity of wiping away the disgrace of Cressy and Poitiers, and blotting out for ever the treaty of Bretigny.

Oh, what would he have given for his liberty then! All his aspirations for glory and renown, all his hopes of winning praise and advancement, all the dreams of young ambition, all the bright imaginations of love, rose up before him as memories of the dead. Those prison walls were their cold sepulchre, that solitary chamber the tomb of all the energies within him. He had well nigh become frantic with disappointment; but he struggled successfully with the despair of his own thoughts, as every man of a really powerful mind will do. No one can obtain full mastery of the minds of others, without having full mastery of his own. He would not suffer his fancy to dwell upon sad things; he strove to create for himself objects of interest; and from the arched window he made himself acquainted as a friend with every object in the wide-spread scene beneath his eyes. Every church spire, every castle tower, every belt of wood, every stream and every road, every hamlet and every house, for miles around, were described and marked as if he had been mapping the country in his own mind. But it was only that he was seeking for objects of interest; and he found them; and variety too, he found; for every hour and every season brought its change. The varying shadows as day rose or declined; the different hues of summer and of winter, of autumn and of spring; the changeful aspect of the April day; the frowning sublimity of the thunder storm; the cold,

stern, desolate gloom of the wintry air, all gave food to nourish fancy with, and from which he extracted thought and occupation.

He had withal, one grand support and consolation: the best after the voice of religion, a conscience clear of offence. He could look back upon the past and say, I have done well. There was no reproach within him for opportunities missed, advantages wasted, or ill deeds done; and often and often, he thought of the first song that poor Ella Brune had sung him, and of that stanza in which she said,

> " In hours of pain and grief,
> If such thou must endure,
> Thy breast shall know relief
> In honour tried and pure;
> For the true heart and kind,
> Its recompence shall find;
> Shall win praise,
> And golden days,
> And live in many a tale."

In the meanwhile his treatment varied greatly at different times. Sometimes the Châtelain was harsh and severe, refusing him almost everything that was necessary to his comfort; at others, with the caprice which is so common amongst rude and uncivilized people, he would seem joyous and good-humoured: would visit his prisoner, talk with him, and send him dishes from his own table, permitting many a little alleviation of his grief, which on former occasions he denied. In one of these happier moods he allowed the page to buy his master a cithern, which proved one of the prisoner's greatest comforts and resources; and not long after, in the summer of 1415, a still greater change of conduct took place towards him. His table became supplied with princely liberality; rich wines and dainty meats were daily set before him; and the page was suffered to go at large about the town to procure anything his master might require.

One day the boy returned very much heated with exercise, and moved with what seemed pleasurable feelings; and looking round the room eagerly, he closed the door with care.

" You have tidings, Will," said the young knight, " and joyful tidings, too, or I am mistaken."

" I have better than tidings," replied the boy. " I have a letter. Read it quick, and then hide it. I will go out into the passage and watch, lest Joachim come up. He was lolling at the foot of the stairs.

Richard of Woodville took the letter from the boy eagerly, and read what was written in the outer cover. The words were few, and in a hand he did not know. "Nothing has been left undone," the writer said, "to set you free. A baron's ransom has been offered for you and refused. The Duke of Burgundy required your liberation as one of the terms of peace, but could not obtain it. The Lord of Croy offered two prisoners of equal rank, and a ransom besides, but did not succeed. But fear not; friends are gathering round you. Be prepared to depart at a moment's notice, and you shall be set free as others have been. The moment you are free, hasten to England; for you have been belied."

Within this was a short letter from Mary Grey, full of tenderness and affection, with words and avowals which she might have scrupled to utter for any other purpose but the generous one of consoling and supporting him she loved, in sorrow and adversity. Beneath her name were written a few words from her father, expressive of more kindness, confidence, and regard, than he had ever previously shown; but he, too, spoke of the young knight's return to England, as absolutely necessary for his own defence; and he too alluded to the rumours against him, without stating what those rumours were.

If there was much to cheer, there was much to distress and grieve; and Woodville paused for several minutes to think over the contents of these letters, and to consider what could be the nature of the calumnies referred to, believing that he had fully refuted the charge of having neglected to obey the King's command to return to England, before he set out on the expedition which had been attended by such an unfortunate result. At length the page looked in, to see if he had done; and Woodville, bidding him shut the door, inquired from whom he had received the letters.

"It was from the young clerk, noble sir," replied the boy, "who was with Sir John Grey at Charleville. I saw a youth in a black gown wandering about the castle gates some days since; and as I stood alone upon the drawbridge, about half an hour ago, he passed me again, and seeing that there was no one there, made me a sign to follow. I walked after him into the church, and then he gave me the letter for you; but bade me tell you to be upon your guard, for that there are enemies near as well as friends. To make sure that you were not deceived, he said, you were to put trust in no one who did not give you the word, "Mary Markham."

"Hark!" cried Woodville, rising and going to the window. "There are trumpets sounding!"

"I heard the Lord of Vaudemont was expected to-day," replied the boy.

"And there he is," said Richard of Woodville, watching a body of horse coming up the hill. "On my honour, if I have speech with him, he shall hear my full thoughts on his discourteous conduct. But now, hie thee away, Will. Seek out this young clerk in the town, and ask if he can convey my answer back to the letters which he brought. I will find means to write if he can."

"Oh, I can find him," replied the boy, "for he told me where he lodged: in the house of a widow woman, named Chatain."

"Away, then!" answered Woodville; "let them not find you here."

When he looked forth from the window again, the young knight could no longer perceive the body of horse he had seen advancing; but the noises which rose up from the court of the castle below, the clang of arms, the gay tones of voices laughing and talking, the word of command, and the shout of the warder, showed him that the party had already arrived. About an hour passed without his hearing more; but then came the sound of steps in the passage; the door opened, and three gentlemen entered, of whom the first was the Count of Vaudemont. The next was a man several years younger; and the third, a stout ill-favoured personage, of nearly fifty years of age. None of them were armed, except with a dagger, usually worn hanging from the waist; and all were dressed in the extravagant style of the French court in that day, with every merely ornamental part of dress exaggerated till it became a monstrosity. Every colour, too, was the brightest that could be found; each contrasted with the other in the most vivid and inharmonious assortment, green and red, amber and blue, pink and yellow, so that each man looked like some gaudy eastern bird new feathered.

The Lord of Vaudemont was evidently in a light and merry mood, or, at least, affected it; for he entered laughing, and at once held out his hand to his prisoner, as if a familiar friend.

Richard of Woodville, however, drew back, saying, "Your pardon, my good lord. I am a captive, for whom ransom has been refused.—You forget!"

"Nay, I remember it well, sir knight," replied the Count, laughing again; "and that you intend to escape. You have

not succeeded yet, I see. However, let me set myself right with you on that head. 'Tis not I who refuse your ransom. 'Tis my lord, the Duke of Aquitaine, who will not have you set free just yet, so that I risk my angels if you have wit enough to find your way out. His commands, however, are express, and I must obey. My lord the Duke of Orleans, here present, will witness for me, as well as my lord of Armagnac, that I would far rather have your gold in my purse, where it is much needed, than your person in Montl'-herry, where it could be well spared."

The young knight regarded the famous nobles, of whom he had heard so much, with no slight interest; and the Duke of Orleans, drawing a settle to the table, leaned his head upon his arm in a thoughtful attitude, saying, "It is quite true, sir; but perhaps that may be remedied ere long. If you be willing to renounce the cause of Burgundy, and agree to serve no more against the crown of France, the difficulty may be removed."

"I have no purpose, sir, to ride for that good lord, the Duke, any more," answered Richard of Woodville; "I did but seek his Court to win honour and renown; but now I am called to England by many motives, so that I may well promise not to serve with him again; but if your proposal goes farther, and you would have me give my knightly word, not to fight for my Sovereign against any power on earth where he may need my arm, I must at once say no. I am his vassal, and will do my duty according to my oath, whenever he shall call upon me. He is my liege lord; and—"

"There are some Englishmen, and not a few," said the Count of Armagnac, in a harsh and grating tone of voice, "who do not hold him to be such, but rather an usurper. Edmund, Earl of March, is your liege lord, young knight."

"He has never claimed that title, noble sir," answered Richard of Woodville; "and indeed, has renounced it, by swearing allegiance himself to his great cousin."

"Compulsion, all compulsion," said the Duke of Orleans; "we shall yet see him on the throne of England."

"I trust not, my lord the Duke," answered the English knight; "but if the plea of compulsion can, in your eyes, justify the breach of an oath, how could you expect me to keep a promise made, not to serve against this crown of France, here in a prison?"

"But why say you, that you trust not to see him on the throne?" asked the Count of Armagnac, evading the part of Woodville's reply which he would have found difficult to

answer. "He is surely a noble and courteous gentleman, full of high virtues."

"Far inferior in all to his royal cousin," answered the knight; "but it is not on that account alone I say so, but for many reasons. We Englishmen believe that our crown is held by somewhat different rights from yours of France. At the coronations of our kings, we by our free voices confirm them on their throne. The people of England have a say in the question of a monarch's title; and without that recognition they are not kings of England. To our present sovereign, the nobles of the land offered their homage ere the crown was placed upon his brow; but he, as wise in this as in all else, would receive none till he was proclaimed King, not by a herald's trumpet, but by the tongues of Englishmen. Besides, I say, I trust I shall never see the Earl of March wearing the English crown, because I hope never to see an honourable nobleman forget his oath, nor a perjured monarch on the throne."

"And yet your fourth Harry forgot his," said the Duke of Orleans.

"Not till intolerable wrongs and base injustice drove him to it," answered the knight; "not till the monarch so far forgot his compact with the subject, as to free him from remembrance of his part of the obligation. Besides, I was then a boy; I found a sovereign reigning by the voice of the people; to him I pledged my first oath of fealty. I have since pledged it to his son; and I will keep it."

The two Counts and the Duke looked at each other with a significant glance; and after a moment's consideration, the Count of Vaudemont changed the subject, saying, "Well, good knight, such are your thoughts. We may judge differently. But say, how have you fared lately? I heard that our worthy Châtelain here had been somewhat harsh with you, resolving that you should not play him such a trick as the boy of Croy; and I ordered that such treatment should be amended. Has it been done? I would not have you used unworthily."

"It has been done in some points, my lord," replied Richard of Woodville, "but not in all."

"Nay, good faith, with warning from your own lips that you sought to escape," answered the Count, "he was right not to relax on all points."

"But some he might have relaxed, yet held me safe," rejoined the young knight. "I have been cut off from all means of holding any communion with my friends, though

it was most needful that I should urge them to offer what terms might find favour for my liberation. I have been kept more like some felon subject of this land, than a fair prisoner of war."

"Nay, that must be changed," said the Duke of Orleans; "such was not your intention, I am sure, De Vaudemont?"

"By no means, noble Duke," answered the Count. "I will take order that it be so no more. You shall have liberty to write to whom you will, sir knight; and, indeed, having a courier going soon to England, you will have the means right soon, if you will, of sending letters. I have heard," he added with a laugh, "that there is a certain noble gentleman of the name of Grey, with whom you have some dear relations—much in King Henry's confidence, if I mistake not. Perchance, were he to use his influence with that Prince, something might be done to mitigate the Dauphin's sternness. We are still negotiating with England, though, by my faith, these preparations at Southampton, and this purchase of vessels from the Hollanders, looks more warlike than one might have wished."

"If my liberation, noble Count, depends on Sir John Grey's using his influence for ought but his Sovereign's interests," replied Richard of Woodville, "I fear I shall be long a captive. However, to him will be, perchance, my only letter; for he can communicate with other friends."

"Do as you will, noble lords," cried the Count of Armagnac, who had been sitting silent for some time, gnawing his nail in gloomy meditation; "but were I you I would suffer no such letters to pass. They will but tend to counteract all that you desire. Here you have in your hands one of the hearty enemies of France: that is clear from every word,—one who, at all risks, would urge his sovereign to deeds of hostility against us, when we are already wrung by internal discord. Why should you suffer him to pour such poison into the hearts of his countrymen?"

"Nay, nay," replied the Count of Vaudemont; "my word is given, and I cannot retract it. We are less harsh than you, my lord, and doubt not that this noble knight will say nothing against the cause of those who grant him this permission."

"On no such subjects will I treat, sirs," answered Richard of Woodville; "the matter of my letter will be simple enough, my own liberation being all the object."

"You must be quick, however," said the Lord of Vaudemont; "for, at morning song, to-morrow, the messenger departs."

The young knight replied that his letters would be ready in an hour, and the three noblemen withdrew for a moment; but he could hear that they continued speaking together in the passage; and the next instant, the Duke of Orleans and the Count of Armagnac returned. "We cannot suffer long letters, sir knight," said the latter, as soon as he entered; "if all you wish is to treat for your ransom, and to induce your friends to exert themselves for your liberation, you can send messages by word of mouth, which we can hear and judge of."

"But how will my friends know that such messages really come from me?" demanded Woodville, with deep mortification.

"Why," replied the Count, after a moment's thought, "you may send a few words in the French tongue, in our presence —for we have heard of inks and inventions which escape the eye of all but the persons for whom they are intended—you may send a few words, I say, merely telling the gentlemen to whom you write, to give credit to what the bearer shall speak."

Woodville paused and meditated; but then, having formed his resolution, he replied, "Well, my good lord, if better may not be, so will I do. Send me the messenger when you will, and I will give him the credentials required."

"Call him now, my fair Lord of Armagnac," said the Duke of Orleans, with a significant look. "He is below."

The count soon reappeared with a stout, plain-looking man, habited as a soldier; and Woodville, after inquiring if he had ever been in England before, and finding that such was not the case, gave him directions for seeking out Sir John Grey in Winchester, from which town the letters that had been conveyed to him were dated. He then gave him messages to Mary's father; and, pointing out that it would be better to lose any amount of money, rather than remain longer in prison, he besought the knight to borrow a sum for him, to the value of one-half of his estates, and offer it to the Lord of Vaudemont as his ransom, adding, somewhat bitterly, "Tell the good knight that I find, in France, the fine old spirit of chivalry is at an end, which led each noble gentleman to fix at once a reasonable ransom for an honourable prisoner, and that nothing but an excessive sum will gain a captive's liberty."

The Duke of Orleans frowned, but made no observation in reply, merely speaking a few words in a low tone to the Count of Armagnac, who went to the door and called aloud for a strip of parchment and some ink.

What he required was soon brought; and he laid before the young knight a narrow slip, not large enough to contain more than a sentence or two, saying, "There, fair sir, you can write in the usual form, as follows,"

Richard of Woodville took the pen and addressed the letter at the top to Sir John Grey: the Duke of Orleans coming round and looking over his shoulder, while the Count of Armagnac stood on the opposite side of the table, and dictated what he was to write.

"You can say," he proceeded, "'These are to beg of you, by your love and regard for me, to hear and believe what the bearer will tell you on my part;' and then put your name."

Richard of Woodville wrote as he directed, word for word, till he came to the conclusion, but then, he added rapidly, "touching my ransom," and affixed his signature so close, that nothing could be interpolated.

"What, have you written more?" cried the Count, whose eye was fixed upon his hand.

"Touching my ransom," said the Duke of Orleans, gazing across. The Count snatched up the parchment, and read it with a frowning brow, as if angry that his dictation had not been exactly followed; and then, beckoning to the Duke of Orleans and the messenger, he hurried abruptly out of the room. The door was not yet shut by the inferior person, who went out last, when the young prisoner heard the Count of Armagnac say to the Duke, in a low growling tone, "This will not do."

"Let me see," said the voice of the Lord of Vaudemont, who had apparently been waiting behind the door. A blasphemous oath followed; and Richard of Woodville heard no more; but a smile crossed his countenance, for they had evidently sought to use him for some secret purpose of their own, and had been frustrated.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FLIGHT.

A MONTH had passed, and Richard of Woodville sat alone in his solitary chamber, on a dark and stormy night, towards the end of September, reading by the glimmering lamp-light, a

book which had been procured for him in the town by his page. The rain blew, the wind whistled, the small panes of glass in the casement rattled and shook, and the howling of the breeze, as it swept round the old tower, seemed full of melancholy thoughts. His own imaginations were heavy and desponding enough—and he eagerly strove to withdraw his attention, both from the voice of the storm without, and from the dark images that rose up in his own heart. But he could not govern his mind as he desired; and still from the pages of the book, he would lift his eyes, and gazing into vacancy revolve every point in his fate, gaining, alas! nothing but fresh matter for sad reflection. He had seen no more of the Count de Vaudemont, the Duke of Orleans, or the Count of Armagnac, and had learned that they had quitted Montl'herry early on the day following that during which he had received their visit. He little heeded their departure, indeed, or desired to see them; for he felt convinced that their only object had been to make a tool of him for secret purposes of their own; and that, disappointed therein, they were in no degree disposed to show him favour, or even to listen to just remonstrance.

What grieved and depressed him more, was the unaccountable disappearance of the young clerk who had brought him the letters from Sir John Grey, but who had been no more seen by the page, after the arrival of the Count de Vaudemont in the town. The boy inquired at the widow's where the clerk had lodged, and was told he had left the place: and no farther trace could be discovered of the course he had pursued, or whither he had turned his steps. The distracted state of the country, indeed, the young knight thought, might have scared the novice away; for the page brought him daily reports of strange events taking place around, of factions, strife, and bloodshed, in almost every province of France, and of rumours that daily grew in strength and consistency, of foreign wars being speedily added to the miseries of the land. Large bodies of armed men passed through the town at different times; the garrison of the castle was diminished to swell the forces preparing for some unexplained enterprise; and the Châtelain himself was called to lead them to the field.

But a stricter guard was kept upon the prisoner than ever. Of the scanty band that remained in the castle, one always remained in arms at his door; and another was stationed at the foot of the stairs. Night and day he was closely watched; and the page himself was not permitted to go in and out,

except at certain hours. All chance of escape seemed removed; and bitterly did Richard of Woodville ponder upon the prospect of long captivity, at the very time when, under other circumstances, opportunity must have occurred for the exertion of all those energies by which he had fondly hoped to win glory, station, and renown.

He struggled hard against such thoughts, and all the bitterness they brought with them; and, after indulging them for a few minutes, turned ever to the page of the book he was reading, and laboured through the crabbed lines of the ill-written manuscript; finding perhaps as much interest in making out the words as in their sense. It was after one of the fits of meditation we have spoken of, that he thus again applied himself to read, and turned over several pages carelessly, to see what would come next in the dull old romaunt, when, suddenly he saw a fresher page than any of the others, and found upon it, written in English, and in a different hand from the rest, but in lines of equal length, so as to deceive a careless eye, and lead to a belief that the words were but a continuation of the poem, the following warning and intelligence:

"Be prepared. Lie not down to rest. Take not off your clothes. King Henry is in France. The Earl of Cambridge, the Lord Scrope, and Sir Thomas Grey, have been executed for treason. Harfleur has been taken; and the King is marching on through the land."

There ended the lines, and the young knight, closing the book, started up and clasped his hands with agitation and surprise. "Harfleur taken, and I not there!" he cried. "This is bitter, indeed! I shall go mad if they do not free me soon —Sir Thomas Grey! surely it cannot be written by mistake. I remember one Sir Thomas Grey, a powerful knight of Northumberland. The Lord Scrope, too; why, he was the King's chamberlain! What can all this mean? Prepared—I will be prepared, indeed. Hark, they are changing the guard at the door. I must not let them see me thus agitated, if they look in;" and seating himself again, he opened the book and seemed to read.

No one came near, however, for another hour, and Richard of Woodville gathered together all that might be needful in case his escape should be more near than he ventured to hope —the little stock of money that remained, a few jewels, and trinkets of gold and silver, and a dagger which he had kept concealed since his capture; for the rest of his arms and his armour had been taken from him as fair spoil. After this was done, he sat and watched; but all was silent in the château,

except when the guard at his door rose and paced up and down the passage, or hummed a verse or two of some idle song to while away the hours.

At length, however, after a long, dead pause, he heard a whisper; and then the bolt of the door was undrawn without, and rising quietly, he gazed towards it as it opened. The only figure that presented itself was that of the guard, whom he had often seen before, and noticed as apparently a gay, good-humoured man, who treated him civilly, and asked after his health in a kindly tone whenever he had occasion to visit him. The man's face was now grave, and Woodville thought a little anxious, and besides his own arms, he bore in his hand a sheathed sword with its baldric, and a large coil of rope upon his arm. Without uttering a word, he crossed the chamber, came close up to the young knight, and put the sword in his hands. Then advancing to the window, he opened it, fastened one end of the rope tight to the iron bar which ran up the centre of the casement, and suffered the other to drop gently down on the outside. Richard of Woodville gazed with some interest at this proceeding, as may be supposed. In the state of his mind at that moment, no means of escape could seem too desperate for him to adopt; and although he doubted that the rope, though strong, would bear his weight, he resolved to make the attempt, notwithstanding the tremendous height of the window from the ground.

Approaching the man, he whispered, "Would it not be better for you to turn the rope round the bar and let me down? My hands have been so long in prison, that I doubt their holding their grasp very tightly."

The man merely waved his finger and shook his head, without reply, finished what he was about, and, taking from the table one of the gloves which the young knight had worn under his gauntlets, much to the spectator's surprise, dropped it out of the window.

"Now come with me," he whispered; "it is needful for us who stay behind, to have it thought for a day or two that you have made your escape without help. The demoiselle has paid us half the money, as she promised; and we will keep our word with her. There shall no danger attend you. We have better means of getting you out than breaking your neck by a fall from the casement."

"But you were to give me a word," said Richard of Woodville.

"Ay," answered the man, "I recollect: it was Mary Markham—Follow me."

Without hesitation, the prisoner accompanied him; but paused for an instant in some surprise on finding two armed men at the back of the door, one holding a lamp in his hand. The guard who was with him, however, took no notice; but, receiving the lamp from the other, led the way in a different direction from the staircase up which Woodville had been brought, when first he was conducted to his chamber of captivity. Then opening a door on the right, he entered a room, in the wall of which appeared a low archway, exposing to the eye, as the light flashed forward, the top of a steep, small staircase.

"I will go down first with the lamp," whispered the man, "that you may see where you are going. Give a heed to your footing, too, for it is mighty slippery, especially on such a damp night as this."

Thus saying, he led the way; and Richard of Woodville followed down the winding steps, cut apparently in the thickness of the wall. Green mould and clammy slime hung upon all the stones as they descended, except where, every here and there, a loophole admitted the free air of heaven and chased the damp away. The steps seemed interminable, one after another, one after another, till Woodville became sure that they were descending to a greater depth than the mere base of the castle; and, looking round, as the lamplight gleamed upon the walls, he beheld no more the hewn stone work which had appeared above, but the rough excavation of the solid rock. At length the steps ceased, as passing along a vault of masonry, perhaps forty or fifty feet long, the man unbolted and unbarred a small but solid door covered with iron plates; and in a moment the lamp was extinguished by the blast from without. All seemed dark and impenetrable to the eye; the wind roared through the vault; the rain dashed in the faces of Woodville and his companion; but, giving the lamp an oath, as if it had been to blame for what the storm had done, the man set it down behind the door, and then walked on, saying, "Keep close to me, for it is steep here."

Following down a little path as the man led, the young knight's eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, and he thought he descried, at a short distance, a group of men and horses standing under a light feathery tree. Hurrying on, with eager hope, he demanded of his guide who the persons were whom he saw before him.

"Your saucy page is one," said the guard; "but who the others are I do not know. The young clerk, I suppose, is one, and his servant the other; for I dare say the demoiselle

would not come out on such a night as this, and faith, I cannot well see whether they be men or women in this light;" and he shaded his eyes with his hands, with very needless precaution, where scarcely a ray pierced the welkin.

At that moment, however, one of the figures moved towards him, asking, "Is all right?"

"All, all," answered the guard; "have you brought the rest of the money, master clerk? Here stands the prisoner free; so my part of the bargain is done."

"And there is the rest of the gold, good fellow," replied the other speaker; "all right money, and well counted."

"Ay, I must take it on your word," said the man who had brought Woodville thither, "my lamp has been blown out; but I may well trust you; for the other half was full tale and a piece over."

"That was for chaffage," replied the youth; "and if this noble knight gets safe to the King's camp, you shall have a hundred pieces more; so go, and keep his escape, and the way he has taken, as secret as possible."

"That I will, for mine own sake," answered the soldier; "or I should soon know gibbet and cord. Good night, good night!" and waving his hand, he turned away, while the young clerk addressed Woodville, saying, "You must put yourself under my guidance, noble sir, for a few hours, and then we shall be safe."

"I have much to thank you for, young gentleman," answered Woodville, following, as the other hurried on to the horses; and in a few minutes the knight, his page, the clerk, and the clerk's servant were on their way. But to Woodville's surprise, instead of taking any of the by-roads that led on through the country to remote villages and hamlets, they followed the direct high road towards Paris, which he had gazed upon for many a day from his solitary chamber in the tower.

After proceeding some way in silence, without hearing any sounds which could lead them to believe that the knight's escape had been discovered, and that they were pursued, Woodville endeavoured to gain some information from the clerk of Sir John Grey, as to the means which had been taken to effect his liberation, and more particularly, as to the lady who had been mentioned by the guard.

On the latter point the youth replied not; and on the former he merely said, "The means were very simple, noble knight, and you yourself saw some of them employed. Money, which unlocks all doors, was the key of your prison. The man who refuses ransom to a captive, had better see that he guard

him sure; for that which is a small sum to him, may be a great one to a gaoler, and one quarter of the amount offered for your redemption, served to set you free. But I think, sir," he added, "we had better speak as little as possible upon any head, till we have passed the capital, for the tongue of an escaped prisoner, like the track of gore to the bloodhound, often brings him within the fangs of his pursuers.

Richard of Woodville judged the caution too wise not to be followed; and on they rode in silence at a brisk pace, with the wind blowing, and the rain dashing against them, through the darkness of the night, for somewhat more than two hours, following the broad and open road all the way, till the young knight thought they must be approaching Paris. More than once, indeed, he fancied that he caught a glimpse of some large dark mass before him; and imagination shaped towers and pinnacles in the black obscurity of night; but at length the clerk's man, who seemed to act as guide, pronounced the words, "To the left!" and striking into a narrower, though still well beaten path, they soon came upon a river, flowing on dull and heavy, but with a glistening light, in the midst of its dark banks, which they followed for some way, till a bridge presented itself, which they crossed, and then, turning a little to the right again, continued their course without drawing a rein, till the faint grey streaks of morning began to appear in the east.

Shortly after, a bell was heard ringing slowly, apparently at no great distance; and the young clerk said aloud, with a sigh of relief, "Thank God!"

"You are fatigued, young gentleman, with this long stormy ride, I fear?" said Richard of Woodville.

"A little," was the only reply; and in a few minutes they stopped at the gate of a small walled building, bearing the aspect of some inferior priory of a religious house. The bell was still ringing when they approached; but the door was closed; and the clerk and his attendant dismounted and knocked for admission. A board was almost immediately withdrawn from behind a grating of iron, about a palm in breadth and twice as much in length, and a voice demanded, "Who are you?"

"Bourgogne," replied the clerk; and instantly the door was opened without further inquiry. The arrival of the party seemed to have been expected; for two men, not dressed in monastic habits, took the horses without further inquiry; a monk addressed himself to Woodville, and bade him follow; and, before he could ask any questions, he and his companions

were led in different directions, the one to one part of the building, and the others to another.

With the same celerity and taciturnity, his guide introduced him to a small but comfortable chamber, provided him with all that he could require, and bidding him strip off his wet clothes, and lie down to rest in peace, returned with a cup of warm spiced wine, "to chase the damp out of his marrow," as he termed it. The young knight drained it willingly, and then would fain have asked the old man some questions; but the only information he could gain imported, that he was at Triel, the old man always replying, "To bed, to bed, and sleep. You can talk when you have had rest."

Woodville finding he could obtain no other answer, followed his counsel: and, wearied with such a journey after a long period of inactivity, but with a heart lightened by the feeling that he was free, he had hardly laid his limbs on the pallet before he was asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE PRISONER FREE.

The only true calm and happy sleep that man can ever obtain, is given by the heart at ease. Slumber, deep, profound, and heavy, may be obtained by fatigue of body or of mind; but even those great and tranquil spirited men, of whom it is recorded that, at any time, they could lie down, banish thought and care, and obtain repose in the most trying circumstances, must have gained the power, from that consciousness of having done all to ensure success in the course before them that human wisdom can achieve, or by that confidence in the resources within, which are the chief lighteners of the load of life.

Richard of Woodville slept soundly, but it was heavily. It was the sleep of weariness, not of peace. His mind was agitated even during slumber, with many of the subjects which might well press for attention in the circumstances in which he was placed; and unbridled fancy hurried him through innumerable dreams. Now he saw her he loved standing at the altar with another; and when the figure turned its face towards him, he beheld Simeon of Roydon. Then he stood in the presence of the King; and Henry, with a frowning brow,

turned to an executioner, with the countenance of Sir Henry Dacre, but gigantic limbs, and ordered him to strike off the prisoner's head. Then came Isabel Beauchamp to plead for his life; and suddenly, as the King was turning away, a pale shadowy form, through which he could see the figures on the arras behind, appeared before the monarch, and he recognised the spirit of the murdered Catherine. Old times were strangely mingled with the thoughts of the present; and sometimes he was a boy again; sometimes still a prisoner in the castle of Montl'herry: sometimes in the court of a strange prince, receiving high rewards for some imaginary service. He heard voices, too, as well as saw sights; and the words rang in his ears,

> For the true heart and kind,
> Its recompence shall find;
> Shall win praise,
> And golden days,
> And live in many a tale.

At length when he had slept long, he suddenly started and raised himself upon his arm, for some one touched him; and looking round he saw the clerk with his black hood still drawn far over his head, and the page who had been his fellow captive, standing by the side of the pallet.

"You must be up and away, sir knight," said the young clerk, in the sweet musical tones of youth. "In an hour, a party of the Canonesses of Cambray, who arrived at noon under the escort of a body of my Lord of Charolois' men-at-arms,* are to depart for Amiens, and you and your page can ride forward with them. I must here leave your fair company; for I have other matters to attend to for my good lord."

"But I shall see you again, young sir, I trust?" said Woodville; "I owe you guerdon, as well as thanks and deep gratitude."

"I have only done my duty, noble knight," replied the clerk; "but we shall soon meet again; for I suppose your first task will be to seek Sir John Grey, who is with the King; and I shall not be long absent from him,—so fare you well, sir."

"But where am I to find him?" demanded Woodville; "remember I am in utter ignorance of all that has happened."

"Nor do I know much," answered the clerk. "Rumour

* The actual removal of the Canonesses of Cambray took place a few months later.

is my only source of information; for I have been cut off from all direct communication for many weeks. The only certainty is, that King Henry and his friends are now in France; that Harfleur surrendered a few weeks ago, and that he is marching through the land with banners displayed. You will hear of him as you go; and as soon as you know which way his steps are bent, you can hasten to join him. But ere you discover yourself to any one else, seek out Sir John Grey, and take counsel with him, for false reports have been spread concerning you, and no one can tell how the King's mind may be affected."

"But tell me, at least, before you go," said Richard of Woodville, "who was the lady spoken of by the man who aided my escape at Montl'herry; and also, who it is that has generously paid the high sums which were doubtless demanded for my deliverance?"

"In truth, noble sir," replied the clerk, "I must not stay to answer you; for the people with whom I go are waiting for me; and I must depart immediately. You will know all hereafter in good time. It was the Lord of Croy who furnished the money needful. Now, fare you well, and Heaven give you guidance!"

Thus saying, he departed, without waiting for farther question; and Richard of Woodville rising, dressed himself in haste in the same clothes which he had worn the day before, but which he now found carefully dried and ready for his use.

"I must have slept sound, boy," he said, speaking to the page, who remained beside him; "for I do not think that at any other time my clothes could have been taken away from my bed side, and I not know it."

"You did sleep sound, sir knight," replied the page, laughing; "and talked in your sleep, moreover, while we were looking at you. But I can tell you who the lady was at Montl'herry, if you must needs know, as well as the clerk, for I saw her once speaking with the guard."

"Say, say!" cried Richard of Woodville, impatiently. "I would fain know, for she must be in peril, if left behind."

"Why, it was the fair demoiselle," answered the page, "who went with us from Nieuport to Ghent. I caught but a glimpse of her, indeed; but that bright face is not easily forgotten when once it has been seen."

"And yet I never thought of her!" murmured Richard of Woodville to himself: "poor girl, her deep gratitude would have merited better remembrance. Why smile you, boy?

Every honourable man is bound to recollect all who trust him, and all who serve him."

"Nay, sir," replied the page, resuming a grave look, "I did but smile to think how often ladies remember knights and gentlemen, when they are themselves forgot."

"A sad comment on the baseness of man's nature," answered Woodville; "let it never be so with you, boy. Now, see for the old monk; my purse is very empty, but I would not that he should call me niggard."

Some minutes passed before the page returned; but when he appeared he came not alone, nor empty handed, for the old man was with him who had conducted the fugitive to his chamber the night before; and the one carried a large bottle and a tin cup, while the other was loaded with a pasty and a loaf of brown bread. Such refreshment was very acceptable to the young knight; but the good monk hurried him at his meal, telling him that his party were waiting for him; and, finishing the repast as soon as possible, Woodville rose and put a piece of gold into his good purveyor's hand, saying, "That for your house, father. Now I am ready."

On going out into the little court between the priory and the abbey, he found some twelve or fourteen men mounted; and at the call of the monk who accompanied him, a party of six Canonesses and two novices, all closely veiled, came forth from the little lodge by the gate. They were soon upon the mules which stood ready for them; but the good ladies eyed with an inquiring glance the young stranger who was about to join their party; and one of them, as she marked the knightly spurs he wore, turned to her companions, and made some observation which created a light-hearted laugh amongst those around. The moment after, they issued forth from the gates, and rode on at a quick pace in the direction of Gisors.

The day was evidently far advanced, but the sun, though somewhat past his meridian, was still very powerful, so that the horses were distressed with the heat. The commander of the men-at-arms, however, would permit no relaxation of their speed, much to the annoyance of the fair Canonesses, who had every inclination to amuse the tedious moments of the journey by chattering with the young knight, and the other persons who escorted them. In reply to their remonstrances, the leader told them that if they did not make haste, they would get entangled between the two armies, and then worse might come of it.

"Besides," he said, "we have strict orders from our lord the Duke to take part with neither French nor English; and

it would be a hard matter to fall in with either, and not strike one stroke for the honour of our arms."

Judging from his reply that he must have some knowledge of the relative position of the two hosts, Richard of Woodville endeavoured to gain intelligence from him, as to both the events which had lately taken place in France, and those which were likely to follow; but the man seemed sullen, and unwilling to communicate with his companion of the way, replying to all questions merely by a monosyllable, or by the assertion that he did not know.

Thus passed by hour after hour, during their first and second day's journey, which brought them to the small town of Breteuil. They had hitherto paused either for the purpose of seeking repose, or of taking refreshment, at religious houses only; but at Breteuil they took up their lodging for the night at the inn of the place, which they found vacant of all guests. The town, too, as they entered it, seemed melancholy and nearly deserted; but the tongue of the good host made up for the stillness which reigned around; and from him Richard of Woodville discovered that the apparent abandonment of the place by its inhabitants was caused partly by the dread which some of the more wealthy townsmen had felt on the near approach of several large detachments of English troops, and partly by the zeal of the younger portion of the population, which had led them to proceed in arms to join the royal standard raised against the invaders. From him, too, the young knight found that the King of England, at the head of his army, was marching rapidly up the Somme, in order to force the passage of that river, but that, as all the fords were strictly guarded, and French troops in immense multitudes were gathering on the opposite bank, it was scarcely possible that many days could pass without a battle.

"'Twas but yesterday at this hour," said the host, "that news reached the town that a fight had taken place at Fremont; and then, this morning we heard it was all false, and that the English King has not yet passed the river."

"Where was he when last you heard of him?" demanded Richard of Woodville, taking care to use the French tongue, which he spoke with less accent, perhaps, than most of the inhabitants of distant provinces.

"Oh, he was at Bauvillers," answered the landlord of the hostel, "and he wont get much farther without fighting, I fancy; for he has got St. Quentin on his right, and our people before him. Heaven send that he may not march back again; for then, he would come right through Breteuil; and we are

poor enough without being pillaged by those vagabond English. I wonder your Duke does not come to the King's help, with all his gallant men-at-arms, for then these proud islanders would be caught in a net, and could not get out."

"It is a wonder," answered Richard of Woodville. "But, hark! and, as he listened, he heard two sweet voices talking in the hall, in a tongue that sounded like English to his ear.

"I am sure of it," said the one, "and if it be so, I beseech you own it. My heart beat so, I can scarcely speak; but, I say again, I am sure of it; and that if you will, you have the power not alone to punish the guilty, for that, perhaps, you may not desire—"

"Yes I do," replied the other, in a somewhat sharper tone; "and in my own good time, I will do it."

"To punish the guilty, the time is your own," replied the first voice; "but, to save the innocent from utter destruction, there is no time but the present."

"Ha! you must tell me more," said the second, in a tone of surprise; "from utter destruction, did you say? Let us to our chamber. There we can speak at ease."

Richard of Woodville heard no more; but what he did hear cast him into deep thought; and when the next morning they again set out upon their journey, he gazed with an inquiring eye at the Canonesses and their companions—and, mingling in their conversation, endeavoured to discover if the voices which he had heard were to be distinguished amongst them. They all laughed and talked gaily with him, however, in the French tongue; and he came to the conclusion, that though the host had assured him the inn was vacant when he and his party arrived, some other guests must have passed the night within its walls.

On their way during this day, he remarked that the leader of the men-at-arms inquired often and anxiously, in every town and village, for news of the two armies. Little information did he gain, except from vague reports; but some of these, it would appear, induced him to alter his course towards Amiens, and strike off to the right, in the direction of Peronne. The young knight had not been inattentive to everything that was said, and he heard that the King of France, and all his nobility, were certainly gathered together in the direction of Bapaume, while the rumour grew stronger and more strong, that the English army had effected the passage of the Somme at some unguarded ford, in the neighbourhood of St. Quentin, and was boldly marching on towards Calais.

Such tidings, as the reader may well suppose, caused not a

little agitation in the mind of the young soldier. Apprehension, lest a battle should be fought and he be absent, was certainly the predominant sensation; but, still he had to ask himself, even if he arrived in time, where arms were to be procured, and a horse fit to bear him through such a strife as that which was likely to take place? The beast he rode, though swift and enduring, was far too lightly formed to carry a knight equipped according to the fashion of that day; and no weapons of any kind did he possess, but the dagger which he had retained when captured.

It seemed clear to him, also, that the leader of the Burgundian men-at-arms, had, in common with most of his countrymen, a strong inclination to take part with the French, who were naturally considered as kinsmen and allies, against the English, who were looked upon as strangers and enemies; and he felt convinced that the soldier's course had been altered in the hope, that, by falling in with the troops of the King of France, he might find a fair excuse for disobeying the more politic orders of his Prince, and take a share in the approaching combat.

Such thoughts brought with them some doubts of his own safety; and assuredly the dull, taciturn, and repulsive demeanour of the commander of the troop, was not calculated to win confidence. It was evident, however, that orders—which he trusted would meet with some respect—had been laid upon his sullen companion, to treat him with deference, and attend to his comfort and convenience; for, at every place where they stopped by the way, the best chamber, after their fair charge had been attended to, was assigned to himself; and it was not without permission that the men-at-arms sat down to the same table with him, affecting much to reverence his knightly rank.

At length, after a long and hard day's ride, the party reached Peronne, on the evening of the second day after quitting Breteuil; and as they approached the gates, the young knight's confidence was somewhat restored, by the leader of the men-at-arms riding up to his side, and saying, in a low tone, "I pray you, sir knight, be careful here, and give no hint of your being an Englishman; for we are coming on dangerous ground."

"I will be careful, my good friend," replied Richard of Woodville; "and to say the truth, if we can discover where the King of England is, it may be as well for me to quit your party soon, as I may bring danger upon you for no purpose."

"We shall soon hear more," replied the soldier, "but you

had better be beyond the walls of Peronne, before you part from us."

The scantiness of the band, and the title of Burgundian soldiers, soon obtained admission for the little party; but all was found in a state of bustle and activity within the town; and every tongue was full of the late passage of the King of England, at a short distance from the place. Great was the bravado of the inhabitants, who universally declared, that they wished he had sat down before their walls, to afford them an opportunity of showing what glorious deeds they would have performed; and all spoke of the condition of the English troops as lamentable, and their fate sealed. The approaching battle was looked forward to as a certain triumph for the arms of France, and rather as a great slaughter of a flying enemy, than a conflict with a powerful force. The very monks of the monastery where the men-at-arms received entertainment, while the Canonesses were lodged in the adjoining nunnery, were full of the same martial spirit; and a few years earlier, it is probable, their superior would have put himself in armour to aid in the destruction of the foe. Frequently was Richard of Woodville appealed to as a knight, to pronounce upon the likelihood of King Henry surrendering at discretion; and some difficulty had he so to shape his answers as to escape suspicion.

From the conversation which took place, however, he learned that his own sovereign was in the neighbourhood of a small town at no great distance; and he resolved, as soon as he was free from the walls of Peronne, to hurry thither without any farther delay. He ventured, during the evening, to issue forth for a short time into the city, in the hope of being able to purchase arms; but scarcely any were to be found in the town; and such had been the demand for good armour, that the price had risen far beyond his scanty means. All that he could afford to buy was a strong, well-tempered sword of a somewhat antique form, which he found in the shop of an armourer; and even for that the price demanded was enormous.

Returning to the monastery, he soon escaped from a sort of conversation that was by no means pleasant to his ear, by retiring to rest; and though for some time he did not sleep, yet when slumber did visit his eyelids, she came soft and balmy. The troubled thoughts died away—the anxious questioning of the unsatisfied mind ceased—the wild throbbing of the eager heart for the coming of the undeveloped hours, found repose; and he woke calm and refreshed with

the first dawn of day, to meet whatever might be in store, with a spirit prepared and ready, and a body reinvigorated by the alternation of exertion and rest.

The monastery was one of those, not at all uncommon in those days, in which the vow of seclusion did not by any means exclude contrivances for enjoying at least some communion with the world. It was not surrounded by stern walls, and a large wing of the building rested upon the street, with windows small and high up indeed, and only lighting the chambers appropriated to the use of visitors, but which often afforded the monks themselves an excellent view of what was passing in the town without. In dressing himself with as much care as circumstances would permit, Richard of Woodville approached one of these narrow casements, and gazed out upon the gay scene that was enacted below; and, though so early, multitudes of people were to be seen passing along. While some stood for a moment gossiping with their neighbours, some were hurrying forward to their busy day, and others pausing to watch a considerable body of men-at-arms, who, in somewhat bad array, and without the display of much soldier-like order, came down from a house farther up.

When he saw them at a distance, the young knight's first thought was, "If all the French troops are like these, it will be no very difficult task to win a field of them." But as the troop came on, and the three leaders riding in front, passed under the window, he was struck by the arms of one of them who appeared in the middle. He could have sworn that the armour in which the knight was habited was familiar to his eye; and it must be recollected that the ornaments which covered the harness of a man-at-arms in those days were rarely the same, so that means of identification were always at hand, such as we do not possess in the present times. But there, before his eyes, if he could believe their testimony, was the identical suit which had been sent to him by good Sir Philip Beauchamp, shortly before he left the shores of England. There were the fan-shaped palettes, with the quaint gilt figures in the corners, and the upturned pauldrons with the edge of gold, and the bacinet shaped like a globe, with the enamelled plate on the forehead bearing "Ave, Maria!"

There could be no doubt that it was the same; and Woodville's brow knit for a moment, and his teeth closed tight. But the next instant he smiled again, asking half aloud, "How could a prisoner of near two years escape pillage? If I meet you in the field, my friend, I will have that harness back again for Mary's sake, or I will lie low."

Thus saying, he resumed his toilet, and the troop passed on. A moment after, he heard a voice singing, and turning to the window again he looked out. The sounds did not come from below; but there was a large projecting mass of building, with loopholes on the three sides, which protruded into the street on his right; and it seemed to him that the sounds came thence. He listened, and caught some of the words; but every now and then they died away in the cadence of a wild French air of the period, but those he could distinguish seemed so well suited to his situation at the time, that he strove eagerly to hear more:—

"Away, away, to the field of fame,
Gallant knight, gallant knight, hie away,"

were the first sounds he could make out; but the next stanza was more distinct, and went on thus, in the French tongue:—

"Think of thy lady at home in her bower,
On her knees, for her lord to pray,
Think of her terror and hope in the hour
When your banner floats proud in array,
Well aday!

"Away, away, to the field of fame,
Gallant knight, gallant knight, hie away!
For King, for country, and deathless name
Is each stroke that is stricken to-day,
Trara la, trara la, trara lay!

"The hopes of years and the fame of life
Are lost or won ere evening's ray,
Thy father's spirit looks down on the strife,
And bids thee to battle away,
Well aday!

"Away, away, to the field of fame,
Gallant knight, gallant knight, hie way!
For king, for country, and deathless name
Is each stroke that is stricken to-day,
Trara la, trara la, trara lay!

As he was listening for more, a knock was heard at the door of his chamber, and bidding the applicant come in, Richard of Woodville was somewhat surprised to see the personage whom we have designated as the clerk's man, enter in some haste.

"I thought you were still sleeping, sir knight," he said; "but I ventured to wake you, as, by Heaven's good will, it seems there will be a battle shortly, and methought you would like to hear such tidings, and be present at such a deed."

"I have heard that such is likely to be the case," answered

Woodville, "and am eager enough to set out, my friend. But how came you here? and where have you left your master?"

"Oh, I have followed you close," the man replied; "I only waited to see that the enemy's hounds had not got scent of the deer; but the slot has been crossed by so many other herds, that they soon lost the track. I have wakened master Isambert, who leads the Duke's party, and he will be in the saddle in half an hour. As to my master, he has gone by the other road, and I dare to say has joined Sir John at Brettenville, or Beauvillers, or where they passed the Somme."

"Is this Isambert very faithful, think you?" asked the young knight.

"Not too much so," replied the man, calmly; "but in your case he dare as soon give his throat to the knife, as do you wrong; for the Duke, and the Count, and the Lord of Croy, would all have bloody vengeance, if aught of evil befel you ere you are with your own people. However, it will not be amiss to quit him soon; for I find a body of his own folks have just marched out under Robinet de Bournonville—as wild a marauder as ever a wild land brought forth; and it is well to get out of such company when they are too many; for what one man dare not do, a number think nothing of."

"Then," said the young knight, "this good Isambert's arrival at Triel was not a matter of chance, as I thought it?"

"Oh, no!" replied the other; "he came thither on purpose to give you aid. He might have saved fifteen leagues by another road; but the Duke's commands were not to be disobeyed. However, noble knight, you had better get some breakfast; for Heaven only knows when we shall have an opportunity of putting anything into our mouths again. You might as well follow a flight of locusts, they tell me, as our army. The refectioner is serving out meat to the men, and mead, too, for we have quitted the land of wine."

The young knight bade him go and provide for himself; and, soon following, he took a hasty meal before he mounted with the rest. The whole party were speedily in the saddle; the streets of the town were soon passed, and the gates of Peronne closed behind them.

CHAPTER XL.

THE MYSTERY.

It is quite right and proper to suppose that the reader is thoroughly acquainted with the position, situation, and peculiarities of every town, to which we may be pleased to lead him; and, therefore, it may be unnecessary to remind him, that Peronne is surrounded by marshy ground, which soon gives way to a hilly country, which, at the time I speak of, was of a very wild and desolate character. The party of Burgundian horse, with Richard of Woodville and the fair Canonesses, rode on through this track towards Arras, at the same quick pace as during the preceding part of their journey; and even the ladies themselves were glad to keep their mules at a rapid amble; for the weather had undergone a sudden change, and a foul north-easterly wind was blowing sharp, cutting them to the marrow. The troop was now increased by the presence of the clerk's servant; and with him, as they went, the young English gentleman held more than one consultation, which resulted in Woodville adopting the resolution of quitting the escort, shortly after passing the Abbey of Arrouaise, where it was proposed that they should stop to dine.

The whole party, however, were destined to be disappointed of their comfortable meal; for when, after passing Feuillancourt, Rancourt, and Sailly, they approached the gates of the monastery, and rang the great bell, no one responded to the summons for some time. As they sat upon their horses waiting for admission, the sight of a neighbouring barn burnt to the ground, and still smoking, showed them that some party of pillagers had passed that morning; and they began to think that the monastery was deserted, which was certainly the case with the little village itself. The sound of voices within, however, at length induced them to make another application to the bell; and, after a short pause, a monk's head appeared at the window over the gate, exclaiming, "Get you gone, brothers, get you gone. You cannot enter here."

The leader of the troop remonstrated, and announced his name as Isambert of Agincourt; but the reply was still the same, the monk adding, by way of explanation, "We have

suffered too much from you all already this morning. We will open our gates to none, and we have cross-bow men within, who will shoot if you do not retire. Do you not see the barns burning?"

"But that was done by the savage Englishmen," replied Isambert; "we are friends. We are men of Burgundy."

"So were these," answered the monk; "but the Duke and the English understand each other; for that sacrilegious villain, Robinet de Bournonville, had Englishmen with him. Get you gone, I will hear no more; and if you do not go, the men shall shoot."

The sight of several men upon the wall, with cross-bows in their hands, gave effect to the old man's words; and Isambert withdrew slowly, muttering curses at his friend, Robinet de Bournonville, for depriving him of his dinner. When he reached the bottom of the next slope, he halted to consult his companions and Richard of Woodville, as to what was to be done to procure food for themselves and for their horses; and he finally determined to return to Sailly, where a good hostel had been observed as they passed.

But Richard of Woodville took this opportunity of separating himself from the rest of the party, and announced his intention to Isambert of Agincourt, who seemed by no means sorry to get rid of him. The clerk's man and his own page were the only companions whom the young gentleman expected to go with him; and he was not a little surprised when the two novices drew aside from the ladies of Cambray, and the taller of the two begged that he would have the kindness to give them the benefit of his escort as far as Hesdin, saying, "We were on our way to Amiens, and thence to Montreuil, and not to Arras, whither, it seems now, this noble gentleman is bending his steps."

One of the Canonesses interposed a remonstrance, representing the danger of falling in with some party of English troops; but she did not venture to use a tone of authority, as the novices belonged to another Order; and the young lady who had already spoken, replied briefly, in a resolute and somewhat haughty tone, "that she had no fear, and, knowing what it was her duty to do, should do it."

"Well, settle the matter as you please, fair ladies," cried Isambert of Agincourt; "only be quick, for I have no time to lose;" and no farther opposition being made, Richard of Woodville undertook to protect, as far as he could, the two novices on the way, only warning them in general terms, that as soon as he discovered the exact position of the armies, he

must join them; promising, however, to send on his page and the man with them to Hesdin. This being understood, he took leave of the commander of the men-at-arms; and choosing the first road to the left, under the direction of the clerk's man, who seemed thoroughly acquainted with the whole country, he proceeded for some way at a quick pace, till they reached a village, which seemed to have escaped the predatory propensities of the soldiery on both parts, and there paused to feed his horses, and to procure some refreshment for himself and his companions.

Though he had tried to entertain the two young ladies to the best of his power as they rode along, either their notions of propriety, or some anxiety in regard to their situation, rendered them cold and taciturn in their communications; and, unlike the gay Canonesses from whom they had just parted, they neither seemed inclined to converse with the knight or with each other, nor ever raised their veils to take a coquettish look at the country through which they passed. They now refused refreshment, also, saying, "It is not our habit to eat with men;" and as the house, at which they had bought some bread and mead, had but one public room, Richard of Woodville, with his two male companions, retired to the door while the horses fed, and left the shy novices to partake of what was set upon the table if they thought fit.

While there, the young knight entered into conversation with the good peasant who supplied them, and, though the jargon which the man spoke was scarcely intelligible, made out, that the English army had marched from Acheux on the preceding day, and had encamped the night before amongst the villages near the source of the Canche. Of the movements of the French army he could learn nothing, however, which led him to a false belief, that he was likely to meet with no interruption from the enemy in following the march of his own sovereign.

As the young knight rode on, and came into the country through which the English army had passed, the sad and terrible effects of that barbarous system of warfare, which was universal in those times, made themselves visible at every step. Houses and villages burnt, cattle slaughtered and left half consumed by the wayside, and fruit trees cut down for the purpose of lighting fires, presented themselves all along the road; and the painful feelings which such a scene could not but produce were aggravated by the lamentations of the villagers, who felt no terror at the appearance of a party consisting of women and of men without any arms except those usually worn in

time of peace, and who poured forth their complaints to Woodville's ear, pointing to their ruined dwellings, and their little property destroyed, and cursing the ambition of kings, and the ferocity of their soldiery.

The young knight felt grieved and sorrowful; but he was surprised to find that the bitterness of the peasantry was less excited against the English themselves, than he had expected; and, on guiding the conversation with one of these poor men in a direction which he thought would lead to some explanation of the fact, the villager replied vehemently, "The English are not so bad as our own people. They are enemies, and we might expect worse at their hands; but, wherever the King or his brothers were, they destroyed little or nothing, and only took what they wanted. But, since they have passed, we have had two bands of Frenchmen, who have destroyed everything that the English left, on the pretence that we favoured them, though they knew that we could not resist. The Duke of York took my meat and my flour; but he left my house standing, and injured no one in the place. That cursed Robinet de Bournonville, and his companion the captain Vodeville, burnt down my house and carried off my daughter."

The young knight consoled the poor man as well as he could, and gave him a piece of silver, thinking it somewhat strange, indeed, that one of Bournonville's companions should have a name so nearly resembling his own. He and his companions rode on, however, still finding that the band, which he had seen issue forth from Peronne in the morning, had gone on before them, till they reached the town of Acheux, which was well nigh deserted. Most of the houses were closed and the doors nailed up; but they had evidently been broken into by the windows, and had been rifled of all their contents. In the mere hovels, indeed, some cottagers were seen; and on inquiring of one of these where they could find any place of rest, as night was coming on, the man led them to a large, ancient, embattled mansion in the centre of the town, which, though stripped of everything easily portable, still contained some beds and pallets. An old woman was found in the house, which she said belonged to the Lord of Acheux, and for a small piece of silver she agreed to make the strangers as comfortable as she could, seeming—perhaps, from old experience of such things—perhaps, from the obtuseness of age—to feel the horrors of war less keenly than any one they had yet met with. Money, however, made all her faculties alive, and declaring that she knew, notwithstanding the pillage which

the place had undergone, where to procure corn for the cattle, and bread, eggs, and even wine, for the party, she set out upon her search, while Woodville and his two male companions led the horses and mules to the vacant stable, and the two novices remained in one of the desolate chambers up the great flight of stairs.

When the beasts had been tied to the manger, the young knight returned with the man and the boy to their fair companions; but the old woman had not yet returned; and as night was falling fast, he lighted a small lamp which he found in the kitchen, and returned with it to the chamber above. A few minutes after, while he was expressing his sorrow to the two maidens that he could find no better lodging for them, the sound of a small party of horse was heard below, and a voice exclaimed in English, "Ah! there is a light—I will lodge here, Matthew. Take my casque. This cursed cuirass pinches me on the shoulder: unbuckle this strap. Keep a watch for Ned, or any one he may send."

The voice was not unfamiliar to Richard of Woodville; and a heavy frown gathered upon his brow. His first impulse was to lay his hand upon his sword, and take a step towards the door; but then, remembering what fearful odds there might be against him, he turned to the window and looked out. He could distinguish little but that there were ten or twelve men below; and as he gazed, a step was heard upon the stairs. The young gentleman turned hastily to close and bolt the door; but to his surprise he beheld the taller of the two novices with the lamp in her hand, walking rapidly towards the entrance; and turning towards him, she said in a stern and solemn tone, "Leave him to me!"

The next instant she had passed the door; and when Richard of Woodville reached it and looked out into the gloomy corridor, he could see her, by the lamp that she held in her hand, meet Simeon of Roydon, upon whose face the full light fell, as he was just reaching the top of the stairs. Her back was towards the young knight, but he perceived that she suddenly raised her veil, and he heard her say, in English, and in a deep and solemn tone, "Ha! Have you come at length?"

Whatever might have been the import of those words on the ear of him to whom they were addressed, he staggered, fell back, and would have been precipitated from the top to the bottom of the stairs, had he not by a convulsive effort grasped the rope that ran along the wall. The light was instantly extinguished, and the moment after Richard felt the

novice's hand laid upon his arm, drawing him back into the room. They all listened, and steps were heard rapidly descending the stairs, followed by the voice of Simeon of Roydon exclaiming, "No, no, I cannot lodge here—I will not lodge here! Mount, and away. We will go on."

"But, noble knight," said another voice,—

"Away, away!" cried Simeon of Roydon again. "Mount! or by Heaven—" and immediately there came the sound of armed men springing on their horses, the tramp of the chargers as they rode away, and the fainter noise of their departing feet.

"In the name of Heaven, who are you?" demanded Richard of Woodville, addressing her who had produced such a strange effect.

"One whom he bitterly injured in former days," replied the novice; "and whom he dares not face even now. Ask no more: that is enough!"

"It were well to quit this place," said the other girl, in a low voice. And the clerk's man urged the same course, adding, "He may take heart and return,—besides, he spoke of some one coming."

Richard of Woodville remained in silence, meditating deeply for several minutes, with his arms folded on his chest, and his eyes bent down. The faint outline of his figure was all that could be seen in the dim semi-darkness that pervaded the room; but the novice who had proposed to go, approached him gently, and laying her hand upon his arm, again urged it, saying, "Had we not better go?"

"Well," said the young knight, starting from his reverie as if suddenly awakened from a dream, "let us go. But yet a cold night ride, with no place of shelter for two young and tender things like you, is no slight matter. Run down, boy, and light the lamp again—"

"No, no, no!" cried one of the two ladies, eagerly. "Light it not! let us go at once.—Hark! there is some one below."

"The old woman's step," cried the page; "I will run down and see what she has got."

He returned in a moment with the good dame, bearing more than she had promised. She easily understood the reason why the light which she offered was refused; and after taking some wine and bread, the whole party descended to the stable, whence the horses were brought forth; and Richard of Woodville, paying her well for her trouble and her provisions, bade the page take the remainder of the bread to feed the poor beasts, when they could venture to pause. In

less than a quarter of an hour the young knight and his companions were once more on their way, under the direction of the clerk's man, who proposed that they should bear a little towards Doulens, which would lead them out of the immediate track that the English army had followed.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CAMP.

September days are short and bright, like the few hours of happiness in the autumn of man's career. September nights are long and dull, like the wearing cares and infirmities of life's decline; but often the calm grand moon will shed her cold splendour over the scene, solemn and serene, like the light of those consolations which Cicero suggested to his friend, for the privation of the warmer joys and more vivid hopes that pass away with the spring and summer of existence, and with the departure of the brighter star.

The wind was sinking away, when Richard of Woodville rode out with his companions from the ruined village of Acheux, and soon fell into a calm soft breeze; the moon rose up in her beauty, and cleared away the dull white haze that had spread over the sky, during the whole day; and, as the travellers wended on in silence, the features of the scene around were clearly marked out by the rays, every bold mass standing forth in strong relief, every deep valley seeming an abyss, where darkness took refuge from the eye of light. For about eight miles farther they pursued their way almost in total silence; but at the end of that distance, the hanging heads and feeble pace of the horses and mules showed, that they would soon be able to go no farther: and the young knight looked anxiously for some place of repose.

That part of the country, as the reader is aware, is famous for its rocks and caverns. There is a very remarkable cave at a place called Albert, but that was at a considerable distance behind them, and on their left. In passing along, however, by the side of a steep cliff, which ran at the distance of a few hundred yards from the road, with a green sward between, the moon shone full upon the rocky face of the hill, and the eye of Richard of Woodville soon perceived the mouth of a

cavern, like a black spot upon the surface of the mountain. After some consultation with his companions, and some suggestions regarding wolves and bears, Woodville determined to try whether shelter could not be found in this "antre vast," for a few hours; and, riding up as far as the footing was safe towards the entrance, the whole party dismounted, and the young knight entering first, explored it by the feel to the very farther end, which, indeed, was at no great distance, as it luckily happened, for in some cases, such an undertaking might have been attended with considerable peril.

It was perfectly vacant, however, and Woodville brought the two novices within the brow of the rude arch, assuring them that they might rest on a large stone near the mouth in safety. He then led his own horse up, the others following, and taking the bits out of their mouths, the men distributed amongst them the bread they had brought from the village, which the poor beasts ate slowly, but with apparent gladness, and then fell to the green grass on the mountain side with still greater relish.

All the party were silent, for all were very weary; and while the clerk's man laid himself down on the sandy bottom of the cave, and the page sat nodding at the entrance, Richard of Woodville remained standing just within the shadow, with his arms folded on his chest; and the two novices remained seated on the stone where they had first placed themselves, with their arms twined together. The young knight thought that they would soon fall asleep; but such was not the case; and when, after the moon had travelled some way to the south, the sound of a horse's feet made itself heard through the stillness of the night, trotting on towards Acheux, the slighter and the shorter of the two girls rose suddenly, and coming forward gazed towards the road, on which, at this time, the rays were falling strong. A moment after a single horseman rode by at a quick pace, but turned not his head in the direction of the cavern, and seemed little to think that he was watched; for the figure of the slumbering page might well have passed for some stone of a quaint form, in that dim light, and the horses had been gathered together under the shadow of a rock.

She strained her eyes upon the passing traveller; and then, as he rode on, she returned to her companion and whispered something to her. The other replied in the same low tone, and, after a brief conversation, they relapsed into silence; and the young knight stripping off his cloak, gave it to them to wrap themselves in, and counselled them to seek some

repose against the fatigues of the coming day. They would fain have excused themselves from taking the mantle; but he insisted, saying that he felt the air sultry; and then seating himself at a distance, he closed his eyes, strove to banish thought, and after several efforts dozed lightly, waking every five or ten minutes and looking out to the sky, till at length a faint grey streak in the east told him that morning was at hand. Then rousing his companions, he called them to repeat their matin prayers, and after they were concluded, hastened to prepare the horses and mules for their onward journey.

Day had not fully dawned ere they were once more on the way; but a considerable distance still lay between them and Hesdin; and the few and scanty villages that were then to be found in that part of the country, were in general deserted, so that but little food was to be found for man or beast. At one farmhouse, indeed, the two weary girls found an hour's repose on the bed of the good farmer's wife. Some bread and meat, and, also, one feed of corn was procured for the horses and mules; but that was all that could be obtained during the whole day, till at length about Fremicourt, they met with a man from whom they learned the exact position of the two armies, which were now drawing nearer and nearer to each other, the head quarters of the one having been established at St. Pol, and those of the English at Blangy.

Shortly after, the clerk's man pointed out a narrow road to the left, saying, that leads to Hesdin; and Woodville, drawing in his rein, turned to his fair companions, saying, "Here, then, we must part; for I must on to Blangy with all speed. The man and the boy shall accompany you; and God guard you on your way."

"Farewell, then, for the present, sir knight," replied the taller of the two girls. "We shall meet again, I think, when I may thank you better than I can now."

"But take your page with you, at least, sir," said the other; "we shall be quite safe, I doubt not."

Richard of Woodville would not consent, however; and giving the boy some directions, he waved his hand, and rode away. Once—just as he was going—he turned his head, hearing voices speaking, and thinking some one called him by name; but the younger novice, as she seemed, was talking with apparent eagerness to the clerk's man, and he caught the sounds—"As soon as he is gone."—"Take plenty with you—"

The young knight perceived that the words were not

addressed to him, and spurred forward. Evening was coming on apace; and Blangy was still ten or twelve miles distant; but his horse was exhausted with long travelling and little food, and nothing would urge him into speed. At a slow walk he pursued his way, till at length, just as the sun touched the edge of the western sky, the animal stopped altogether, with his limbs trembling and evidently unable to proceed. Richard of Woodville dismounted; and taking the bit out of the horse's mouth, he relieved him from the saddle, and led him a little way from the road, saying, "There, poor beast, find food and rest if you can." He then left him, and walked on a-foot.

The red evening light at first glowed brightly in the sky; but soon it grew grey, and faint twilight was all that remained, when the road wound in to a deep forest, covering the sides of a high hill. Woodville had heard that Blangy was situated in the midst of woodlands, and his heart felt relieved as he approached; but the darkness increased as he went on, and at length the stars shone out above. Soon after a hum as of a distant multitude met his ear; but it was lost again as the road wound round the ascent amidst the tall trees; and all was silent and solemn. About a quarter of a mile onward, where the hill was steep, the path rose above the scrubby brushwood on his left, and he could see over the forest to a spot where a reddish glare rose up from the bottom of the valley. But somewhat farther in the forest itself, on a spot where the taller trees had fallen before the axe, and nothing but thin underwood remained, he caught a sight of three or four fires, the light of which shone upon some half dozen tents; and the figures of men moving about across the blaze were apparent, notwithstanding the darkness of the night.

The distance might be three or four hundred yards; and Richard of Woodville, wearied and exhausted, resolved to make his way thither, rather than take the longer and more tedious course of following the road to the bottom of the hill. Plunging in, then, sometimes through low copse, sometimes amongst tall trees, he hurried on, feeling faint and heavy-hearted again; for the first joy of rejoining his countrymen had passed away, and from the rumours he had heard, he not a little doubted of his reception. He knew, indeed, that he had nothing to reproach himself with, and felt sure that he should easily prove the falsehood of any charge against him: but it was painful to think that, after long imprisonment, and the loss of many a bright day and fond hope, he should be met with coldness and frowns upon his first return. The

body, too, weighed upon the spirit as it always does in every moment of lassitude and exhaustion, so that all things seemed darker to his eye than they would have done at another moment.

On he walked, however, his feet catching in the long briers, or striking against the stumps of felled trees, till at length a man started up before him, and exclaimed, "Who goes there?"

"A friend!" answered the young knight, in the same English tongue.

"What friend?" demanded the soldier, advancing.

"My name is Woodville. Lead me to your lord, whoever he is," replied Richard.

"Here, Mark!" cried the man to another, who was a little farther down, "take him to Sir Henry's tent;" and suffering the knight to pass on, he laid himself down again amongst the leaves.

The second soldier gazed at the young knight steadily for a moment by the blaze of the burning wood, and then told him to follow, murmuring something to himself as he led the way. They passed the two fires without any notice from the men who were congregated round, and approached the tents, while from the valley below, rose up some wild strains of instrumental music, the flourish of trumpets and clarions, mixed with the sound of many human voices, talking, laughing, and shouting.

"Have you seen the enemy yet?" asked Richard of Woodville.

"No, sir," replied his guide; "but we shall see him to-morrow, they say. Here is the knight's tent. *You* may go in, I know."

The man laid a strong emphasis on the word "you," and turning to look at him, as held back the hangings of the tent, the young knight thought he recognised an old familiar face. The next instant he was within the canvass, and beheld before him a man of about his own age, seated at a board raised upon two trestles, with a lamp burning, and a book spread out under his eyes. His head was bent upon his hand, and the curls of his thick short hair were black, mingled here and there with a silvery thread. He was deep in study, and heard not the rustle of the tent as the stranger entered, nor his foot-fall within; and Richard paused for an instant and gazed upon him. As he did so, his eye grew moist; and he said in a low voice, "Dacre!—Harry!"

Sir Henry Dacre started, and raised his worn and care-wrought countenance; and springing forward, he clasped

Woodville in his arms, exclaiming, "Oh, Richard—can it be you?"

Then looking with an apprehensive eye round the tent, he said, "Thank God, there is no one here!—Did they know you?—Did any one see you?"

"Yes," replied Richard of Woodville; "two of your men saw me, Dacre. But what means all this?—Why should Richard of Woodville fear to be seen by mortal man?"

"Oh, there are strange and false reports about, Richard," replied Dacre, with a sorrowful look;—"false, most false, I know them to be. I am too well aware how men can lie and calumniate. But you will find all men, except some few true friends, against you here; for day by day, and hour by hour, these rumours have been increasing, and every one, even to the peasantry of the land, seem to be leagued against you."

"Give me but some food, Dacre, and a cup of wine," answered Richard of Woodville, "and I will meet them this minute face to face. Why, Dacre, I have nought to fear. I have had neither time nor opportunity to do one base act, if I had been so willed. I am but a few short days out of bonds,—and my first act will be to seek the King, and dare any man on earth to bring a charge against me."

"Not to-night, not to-night," cried Sir Harry Dacre; "let there be some preparation first—Hear all that has been said."

"Not an hour will I lie under a stain, Harry," replied his friend. "I am weary, faint, and exhausted for want of food. Give me some wine and bread—throw open the door of your tent; and let all your men see me. Let them rejoice that I have come back to do myself right. I fear not to show my face to any one."

Dacre, with a slow step and thoughtful brow, went to the entrance of the tent and called to those without, to bring food and wine; and the board was soon spread with such provisions as the camp could afford. Seating himself on a coffer of arms, Woodville ate sparingly, and drank a cup of wine, asking from time to time, "Where is Sir John Grey?—Where is my good uncle?—He will not be absent from an enterprise like this, I am right sure."

"Here, here; both here," answered Sir Henry Dacre; "and Mary and Isabel are even now at Calais,—but be advised, my friend. Do not show yourself to-night. The whole court is crowding round the King in the village down below. Let the battle be first over. You will do good service, I am sure. You can fight in armour not your own, and then—"

"Armour, Harry!" cried the young knight, "I have no armour; but the armour of a true heart; and that is proof against the shafts of calumny. It never shall be said that Richard of Woodville paused when the straightforward course of honour was before him. Thought, preparation, care, would be a slander on my own good name—I need no meditated defence. I have done nought on earth that an English knight should blush to do; and he who says so lies—. Now I am ready for the task—Ha, Hugh of Clatford, is that you?" he continued, as some one entered the tent. "You have just come in time to be my messenger."

"Full glad I am to see you, noble sir," answered the stout yeoman; "we have a world of liars amongst us, which is the only thing that makes me fancy these Frenchmen may win the day. But, now you are come, you will put them to silence, I am sure."

"Right, Hugh, right!" replied Woodville. "But you have some word for Sir Harry. Speak your message; and then I will give mine."

"'Tis no great matter, sir," said Hugh of Clatford. "Sir Philip begs you would send him two loads of arrows, Sir Henry, if you have any to spare; that is all," he continued, addressing Dacre; and when the knight had answered, Woodville resumed eagerly, "If you are a true friend, Hugh, you will go do down for me to the King's quarters, and say to the first high officer that you can speak to, that Sir Richard of Woodville, just escaped from a French prison, is here in camp, and beseeches his Grace to grant him audience, as he hears that false and calumnious reports, to which he gives the lie, have been spread concerning him, while he has been suffering captivity."

"I will call out our old knight himself," replied Hugh; "he is now with the King at the castle, and will do the errand boldly, I am sure."

"Away then, quick, good Hugh, for I am all impatience," said Woodville; and the yeoman retired.

When he was gone, Sir Harry Dacre would fain have spoken with his friend regarding all the reports that had been circulated of him during his absence; but Woodville would not hear; and, taking another cup of wine, he said, "I shall learn the falsehoods soon enough, Harry.—Now tell me of yourself and Isabel."

But Dacre waved his hand. "I cannot talk of that," he said, "'tis the same as ever. She knows how I love her, and her father too; but the phantom of a doubt still crosses her—even

her; that I can see, and good Sir Philip answers bluffly as is his wont, that he knows it is false; but yet—but yet! Oh, that accursed 'but yet,' Richard. The plague spot is upon me still. That is enough. The breath of one foul vapour can obscure the sun, and the tongue of one false villain can tarnish the honour of a life."

"Poo, nonsense, Harry," answered his companion; "I will show you ere many hours be over, how lightly I can shake falsehood off. 'Tis still your own heart that swells the load. I had not thought my uncle was so foolish—so unkind."

He whiled him on to speak farther; but the same cloud was still upon Sir Henry Dacre's mind. It was unchanged and dark as ever. Study, to which he had given himself up, had done nought to clear it away; reflection had not chased it thence; time itself had not lightened it.

Half an hour passed, and then there came a tramp as of armed men. Dacre looked anxiously on his friend's face; but Woodville heard it calmly; and when the hangings were drawn back and a royal officer entered, followed by a party of archers, no change came upon his countenance.

"What is your pleasure, Sir William Porter?" asked Dacre, looking at him earnestly.

"I am sorry, sir, to have this duty," replied the officer; "but I am sent to arrest Sir Richard of Woodville, charged with high treason."

Woodville smiled; "Are your orders, sir, to bring me before the King?" he demanded.

"No, sir knight," answered Sir William Porter, "I am to hold you a prisoner till his Grace's pleasure is known."

"Then I must ask a boon," replied Woodville; "which is simply this, that you will keep me here in ward, till one of your men convey this to the King. He gave it me long ago, and bade me in a strait like this, make use of it. Let your messenger say, that I claim his royal promise to be heard when I ask it." At the same time, he took a ring from his finger; but then, recollecting himself, he said, "But stay, I will write —so he commanded."

"You must write quickly, sir knight," replied Sir William Porter; "for the King retires early, and I must not wait long."

"My words shall be very few," answered Woodville; and Sir Harry Dacre, with hasty hands, produced paper and ink. The young knight's words were, indeed, few. "My Liege," he wrote, "I have returned from long captivity, and find that I have been charged with crimes while my tongue was silent

in prison. I know not what men lay to my account; but I know that I have done no wrong. Your Grace once promised, that if I needed aught at your royal hands, and sealed my letter with the ring you then gave me, you would read the contents yourself, and at once. I do so now; but I have no boon to ask of you, my Liege, but to be admitted to your presence, to hear the charges made against me, and to give the lie to those who made them. Love to your royal person, zeal for your service, honour to your crown, I own I have ever felt; but if these be not crimes, I have committed none other against you, and am ready to be sifted like chaff, sure that my honesty will appear. God grant you, royal Sir, his great protection, victory over all your enemies, and subjects as faithful as

"Richard of Woodville."

He folded, sealed it, and delivered it to the royal officer, saying, "Let the King be besought to look at the seal. His royal promise is given that he will read it with his own eyes."

Sir William Porter examined the impression with a thoughtful look, and then replied abruptly, "I will take it myself.—Guard the tent," he continued, turning to his men, and withdrew.

With more speed than Woodville or Dacre had thought possible, he returned, and entering, bade the prisoner follow. "The King will see you, sir knight," he said; "your letter has had its effect."

"As all true words ever will have on his noble heart," replied Woodville, rising.

"I will go with you, Richard," exclaimed Sir Harry Dacre. "Who is with the King, Sir William?"

"His uncle, noble sir, his brothers, the Earl of Warwick, Sir Philip Beauchamp, Sir John Grey, Philip the Treasurer, and some others. But we must speed, for it is late;" and, leading the way from the tent, he walked on towards the small town of Blangy, with Woodville and his friend, followed by the archers, and one or two of Dacre's servants.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE CHARGES.

"We shall see, my good lord, we shall see," said Henry V. to the Earl of Stafford as he stood surrounded by his court in the hall of the old castle of Blangy. "I have, it is true, learned sad lessons, that those we most trust are often the least worthy.—Nay, let me not say 'often,' but rather, sometimes; and yet," he added, after a pause, "perhaps I am wrong there, too; for it has not happened to me in life, that one, of whom I have had no misgivings, has proved false.—May it never happen. Those, indeed, of whom I would not believe the strange and instinctive doubts which sometimes, from a mere look or tone, creep into the heart—those whom I have trusted against my spirit, may have, indeed, betrayed me; but there is something in plain straightforward honesty that may not always suit a monarch's humour, but which cannot well be suspected—and besides—but it matters not. We shall see."

It was evident to all, that his thoughts turned to that dark conspiracy against his throne and life, which had been detected and punished at Southampton; and as every one knew it was a painful and a dangerous subject with the King—the only one, indeed, that ever moved him to a hasty burst of passion, all were silent; and while the King still bent his eyes to the ground in meditation, Sir William Porter, afterwards raised to the then high office of grand carver, entered and approached his Sovereign.

"The prisoner is without, royal Sir," he said.

"Let him come in," answered Henry; and raising his face towards the door, he regarded Woodville as he walked forward, followed by Sir Henry Dacre, with that fixed unwavering glance that was peculiar to him. His eyelids did not wink, not the slightest movement of the lips or nostril could be observed by those nearest him; but the light of his eye fell calm and grave upon the young knight, like the beams of a wintry sun.

The demeanour of Woodville was not less like himself. With a rapid step, firm and free, with his broad chest expanded, his brow serene but thoughtful, and with his eyes raised to the monarch without looking to the right or left, he

advanced till he was within two steps of Henry, and then bowed his head with an air of calm respect. He was quite silent, however, till the King spoke.

"You have asked to be admitted to our presence, Sir Richard of Woodville," said the King; "and, according to the tenour of a promise once made, we have granted your request. What have you to say to the charges made against you?"

"I know not what they are, my Liege," replied Woodville; "but, whatever they may be, if they lay to my account aught of disloyalty to you, I say that they are false."

"And have you heard nothing?" asked the King, in a tone of surprise; "has no one told you?"

"He would not hear me, Sire," said Dacre, stepping forward. "He said he would meet them unprepared in your own presence."

"It is well," rejoined Henry; "then you shall hear them from my lips, sir knight; and God grant you clear yourself; for none wishes it more than I do.—Did I not command you, sir, now well nigh twenty months ago, to retire from the forces of our cousin of Burgundy and return to your native land, for our especial service?"

"Such commands may have been sent, my Liege, but they never reached me," replied the young knight; "and when a mere rumour found its way to me, I was on the eve of setting out on that fatal enterprise in which I lost my liberty. I can appeal to the noble Lord of Croy when the tidings came, to speak how much pain they gave me, and how ready I was to abandon all and follow your commands."

"Be it so," answered Henry; "that point shall be inquired into. You say you have been a prisoner. How long is it since you were set at liberty?"

"But five days, Sire," replied the knight; "no longer than was needful to journey from Montl'herry hither."

"And did you come alone?" demanded the King.

"No, Sire," said Richard of Woodville; "from the abbey at Arrouaise, I was accompanied by my page, a man who aided in my escape from prison, and two young novices journeying to Montreuil. I sent the two ladies from Fremicourt on to Hesdin, under the escort of the man and the page, and rode on hitherward myself, till my horse would go no farther. The rest of the way I walked on foot."

"But before you reached Arrouaise, were you alone?" inquired the King.

"No, Sire; as far as Triel, I had but the man, the boy, and

a clerk of Sir John Grey's with me, who effected my liberation between them; but after that I was accompanied by a small body of Burgundian horse, who were escorting some Canonesses and these two novices on the way."

"Add, and burning monasteries, plundering villages, and cutting off the stragglers of your Sovereign's army, sir knight," rejoined the King, sternly.

Richard of Woodville gazed in his face for an instant in surprise, and then broke into a gay laugh, saying,

"'I avow to God, quoth Harry,
I shall not lefe behynde,
May I mete with Bernard
Or Bayard the blynde.'

Now I understand your Grace, for I have come upon the track of these men, and somewhat wondered to hear in the mouth of hinds and peasants, the name of Woodville, or Vodeville as they called it, coupled with curses. Nay, more, my Liege, I saw in the good town of Peronne, through which I passed, a man in my own armour, at the head of a large troop of men-at-arms."

"I saw him, too, Dickon;" cried the voice of old Sir Philip Beauchamp, "as he followed our rear at Pont St. Remie; and would have sworn that it was thyself, had I not known thy true heart from a boy."

"A strange tale, sir knight," said the King, without relaxing his grave frown; "and the more strange, when coupled with the facts of your having never received my commands to return, sent long ago, and my messenger having brought me word, as if from your mouth, that you could not obey, as you had taken service with the Duke of Burgundy for two years and a day."

"He is a false knave, my Liege," replied the knight; "and, as to my ever having forgotten your Grace's commands even for a day, not to engage myself for long, that I can prove, for thank God my contract with the good Duke John I have always kept about me. Here it is; and if you look, royal Sir, you will see I have not been unmindful of my duty."

Henry took the paper, which Woodville produced, from the young knight's hand, and read it over attentively, pausing at one clause and pronouncing the words aloud, "And it is, moreover, agreed between the said high and mighty Prince Philip, Count of Charolois, and the said knight, that should the King of England, Henry the Fifth of that name, require the aid and service of the said Sir Richard of Woodville, he

shall be at liberty to retire at any time without let or hindrance from the forces of the said Count of Charolois or of his father and redoubted Lord, the Duke of Burgundy, together with all such men as have accompanied the said knight from England; and, moreover, that he shall receive all the passes, safe-conducts, and letters of protection which may be needful for him to return to his own land in safety, and that, without delay or hesitation, but even at a moment's notice."

The King when he had read these words gave a momentary glance around; but then, turning to the young knight again, after examining the date of the paper and the signature, "You were at this time assuredly in your devoir," he said; "and this was but a month before my messenger set out; but we have heard from Sir Philip de Morgan some strange tales of adventures in the town of Ghent, which may have changed your purposes."

"My Lord, I do beseech your Grace," answered Woodville, gravely, "to give ear to no strange tales till they be fully proved. I have already suffered from such stories, and have disproved them to one here present much interested to know the truth;" and he turned his eyes towards Sir John Grey, who stood beside the Earl of Warwick. "For one so long a prisoner, not knowing where to find a single person who was with him at a remote period, it is not easy in a moment to show the real state of every fact alleged; but if your royal time may serve, I am ready to tell the simple tale of the last two years; and if I afterwards prove not to your own clear conviction, that every word I speak is truth, send my head to the block when you will."

"You shall have full time, sir knight," replied the King; "at present, it is late; and though we must sleep but little, yet some repose every man must have. Your tale cannot be heard to-night. However, you now know that you are charged first with refusing to serve your King in arms against his enemies, which may, perhaps, be false. This paper affords some presumption against the accusation—Secondly, you are charged with following our royal host with men of Burgundy, and in arms levying war against your Sovereign. You have, we are told, been seen by many, so traitorously employed, and your name, you yourself allow, is in the mouths of all the peasantry."

Henry paused a moment, as if expecting assent; but Woodville only replied by a question, "May I ask, Sire," he said, "if a certain Sir Simeon of Roydon is in your host?"

"Ha!" cried the King, his face lighting up, "what would you say on that score?"

"Simply that I have suspicions, mighty Prince," replied the young knight; "but *I* will charge no man without proof. These two charges are false, and I will make it manifest they are so; first by testimony; then by my arm. Is there aught else against me?"

"Alas, there is," answered the King; "and the most grave of all. Have you brought that letter which I sent for, my lord?"

"Yes, Sire," replied the Earl of Arundel, stepping forward and placing a paper in the King's hands. "That is the one your Grace meant, I believe."

"The same," answered Henry, gazing upon it with a countenance both stern and sad. "Come forward, Sir Richard of Woodville. Is this your hand-writing?"

Woodville looked at it, and recognised at once the letter which he had written to Sir John Grey whilst in prison. "It is, my Liege," he replied boldly, looking in the King's face with surprise. "I wrote that letter; but I know not how it can affect me."

"That will be proved hereafter, sir," answered the King, in a stern tone; "but remember, I have doomed my own blood to death for the acts which this letter prompted; and, by my honour and my life, I will not spare the man that wrote it. According to the right of every Englishman, you shall be tried and judged by your peers; but when the axe struck the neck of Cambridge, it crushed out the name of mercy from my heart. In me you find no grace."

"My Lord, I need none," replied Richard of Woodville, in atone firm, yet respectful, "for I have done no wrong. I never yet did hear that there was any crime in a captive writing to a friend for ransom. This letter prompted nothing; and I am in much surprise to hear your royal words announce therein a matter of complaint against me."

"The man to whom it was written, sir," said the King, "proved himself a traitor, and took the gold of France to sell his sovereign's life, and his country's welfare to the enemy."

Richard of Woodville gazed in surprise and bewilderment from the King to Sir John Grey, and from Sir John Grey to the King, while the father of her he loved looked not less astonished than himself. But Henry after a short pause added aloud, "Remove him, Sir William Porter. If God give us good success in the coming fight, he shall have fair trial and due judgment. If the will of heaven fight against us, though perchance he may escape to live, I do believe, from what I have known of him in former days, that he will find bitter punishment in his own heart for this dark deed;"

and he struck his fingers sharply upon the paper, which he still held in his hand.

"Some way—I know not what—you are deceived, my Liege," said Richard of Woodville, with perfect calmness. "However, I have but one favour to ask, and that is, that you will not let a false and lying accusation so weigh against me as to deprive me of my right and glory—that of fighting for my King, I would say; and I pledge you my honour and my soul that, if the day be lost, which God forfend, I will not survive the battle; if it be won, I will bring my head to your Grace's feet, to do with as seems meet to you; for I am no traitor, so help me heaven! and on that score I fear neither the judgment of man nor that of God."

"I know that you are brave right well, Sir Richard," answered the King; "but we will have no traitors fight upon our side."

The young knight cast his eyes bitterly towards the ground; and Henry could see the fingers of his hand clenched tight into the palm; but Sir Henry Dacre stepped forward, and said, "I will be his bail, my Liege."

"And I too, royal sir," cried old Sir Philip Beauchamp; "I will plight land and liberty, life and honour, that he is as true as my good sword. Have I not known him from a babe?"

"You are his uncle, sir," answered the King; "and, in this case, cannot judge."

"I am in no way akin to him, my gracious Sovereign," said Sir John Grey, advancing from the side of the Earl of Warwick; "but I fear not also to be his bail. My life for his, if he be not true."

Richard of Woodville crossed his arms upon his chest; and, raising his head as his friends spoke, looked proudly round, saying, "There is something to live for, after all."

At the same moment, Henry turned to the Duke of York, and spoke a word or two with him and the Duke of Clarence.

"Your request cannot be granted," he said, in a milder tone; "but yet, we will deal with you in all lenity, Sir Richard; and, therefore, we will commit you to the ward of Sir John Grey, with strict orders, however, that he hold you as a close prisoner till after your trial. And now, I can hear no more; for the night is well spent, and we must march at dawn. Take him, Sir John; you have a guard, and answer to me for him with your life."

"I will, my Liege," replied Sir John Grey, advancing, and taking the young knight's arm. "Come, Richard, you

shall be my guest. I have no doubts;" and, bowing to the King, he retired from the presence.

Sir Philip Beauchamp and Sir Harry Dacre followed quickly, and overtook them on the stairs; and the old knight shook his nephew playfully by the shoulders, exclaiming, "We will confound the knaves yet, Dickon. But what is this letter?"

"Merely one I wrote to Sir John Grey," replied Richard of Woodville; "beseeching him to communicate with the bearer touching my ransom."

"I never received it," replied Sir John Grey. "It did not reach my hands; but, please God, I will see it ere I sleep."

"I must fight at this battle," said Richard of Woodville, thoughtfully; "I must fight at this battle, my noble friends."

Sir John Grey replied not, but shook his head gravely, and led the way to the house where he was lodged.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE FOX IN THE SNARE.

Spread out in a long line over the face of the country, the English army occupied a number of villages, keeping a good watch lest the enemy, large bodies of whom had been apparent during the morning, should take them by surprise and overwhelm them by numbers. Small parties of the freshest men were lodged in tents between the different villages, so that a constant communication might be kept up, and support be ready for any point attacked; and, throughout the whole host, reigned that stern and resolute spirit, the peculiar characteristic of the English soldiery, and which has assured them the victory in so many fields, against more impetuous, but less determined, adversaries. Yet none, however resolute and brave in Henry's army, could help feeling that a great and perilous day was before them, when it was known, that at least a hundred and twenty-five thousand men, comprising the most renowned chivalry of Europe, were collected to oppose a force of less than twenty-five thousand, worn with a long and difficult march, and weakened by sickness and want of provisions.

Nevertheless, during the whole night of Thursday, the

24th of October, from hamlet and village, from priory and castle, from tent and field, wherever the English were quartered, rose up wild bursts of martial music floating on the air to the French camp, as, round the innumerable watch-fires which lighted the whole sky with their lurid glare, sat the myriads of the enemy in their wide extended position at Roussanville and Agincourt.

In one of the small villages near the head-quarters of the King, was stationed Sir John Grey, who now having recovered all the great possessions of his family, appeared in the field at the head of a large body of men, whose services under his banner procured for him, at an after period, as the reader is probably aware, the earldom of Tankerville. The house which he inhabited during that night, was the dwelling of a farmer; and in one of the small rooms thereof sat Richard of Woodville, at about eleven o'clock at night, conversing with Mary's father, with a somewhat gloomy and anxious air.

"I have seen it myself, Richard," said Sir John Grey; "the superscription is clear and distinct—'To Sir Thomas Grey, Knight,'—and not one word is mentioned therein of anything like ransom."

"Then it has been falsified!" cried Richard of Woodville; "for my letter was to you. Why should I write to Sir Thomas Grey, a man I know nought of? I never saw him—hardly ever heard of him. Even now I am scarcely aware of who he was, or what he did."

"He was an arch villain, Richard," replied the knight. "The only one, of all the three, who took the gold of France. Cambridge and Scroop has other views, which they nobly hid within their own bosoms, lest they should injure others; but this man was a traitor indeed, and he, ere his death, gave this letter, it seems, into the King's own hands, as that which began his communication with the enemy. He even laid his death at your door, for having written to him by the French suborner.—But here is Sir Henry Dacre.—What is it you seek, good knight? You seem eager about something."

"There are people without requiring to speak with you, Sir John," answered Woodville's friend. "They have got a man in their hands, who, they say, is a knave, sent to you by one you know."

"I want no knaves," replied Sir John Grey; "but I will see who it is;" and he went out.

"Now, what speed, my friend?" continued Dacre, grasping Woodville's hand; "what says Sir John?"

"That it must not be," said Richard of Woodville. "That

his duty to the King would not suffer it, even were I his son."

"Then we must try other means," answered Dacre hastily. "You shall fight to-morrow, Woodville. God forbid that you should lose a field like this. You shall take my armour, and I will ride in a different suit. Only be ready, at a moment's notice," he added; "for as soon as Sir John is in the field, I will bear you off from the men he leaves on guard."

Woodville smiled gladly; for certain of his own honour and of his own conduct, he scrupled not to take advantage of any means to free himself from the restraint under which he was held. He had no opportunity, however, of communicating farther with his friend; for the next moment Sir John Grey returned, followed by several men-at-arms and archers, with a slight, but long-armed man in their hands, habited in a suit of demi-armour, such as was worn by the inferior soldiery, but with a vizored casque, which concealed his face.

"Take off his bacinet," said Sir John Grey; and the helmet being removed, displayed to the eyes of Richard of Woodville the countenance of his former servant Dyram. The man gazed sullenly upon the ground; and Sir John Grey, after eyeing him for a moment, seated himself by Woodville, saying, "I have seen this man before, methinks."

"And so have I, too often," rejoined the young knight; "he was once a servant of mine, and shamefully betrayed his trust. Keep him safe, Sir John, I beseech you; for on him may greatly depend my exculpation with the King."

The man turned round suddenly towards him, and exclaimed, "Ay, and so it does. On me, and me alone, depends your exculpation. Your fate is in my hands."

"Less than you think, perchance, knave!" answered Sir John Grey; "for I hold here strange lights to clear up some dark mysteries. Yet speak, if you be so inclined; you may merit mercy by a frank avowal."

"Send these men hence," said Dyram, looking to the soldiers; "I will say nought before them."

"Go, Edmond," replied the elder knight, speaking to the chief of those who had brought the prisoner in; "yet, first tell me where you found him, and how?"

"Guided by Jim of Retford," said the soldier, "we caught him about a mile on this side of a place called Acheux, I think, some twenty miles hence or more, We found that letter upon him, noble sir, and that," he continued, laying down on the table two pieces of paper. "We might not have searched him, indeed, but he tried to eat that last one. You

may see the marks of his teeth in it; and Jim of Retford forced his mouth open with his anelace to take it out. He says 'tis treason; but I know not, for I am no clerk."

Sir John Grey held the paper to the light and read. "Treason it certainly is," he said, when he had done. "One fourth of the booty secured to Edward Dyram, if the scheme succeeds!—Ay, who are these?—Isambert of Agincourt, Robinet de Bournonville, and S. R.? Who may he be, fellow?"

But Dyram was silent; and Sir Harry Dacre cried eagerly, "Let me see it, sir; let me see it!—Ay, I know it well.—Woodville your suspicions are true."

"Go, Edmond, and guard the passage," said Sir John Grey; "I will call when you are wanted.—Now, sir, will you speak?"

"Ay," answered Dyram, as he saw the man depart, and the door close; "I will, sir knight. First, I will speak to you, Richard of Woodville, and will tell you that I have the power to sweep away every cloud that has fallen upon you, or to make them darker still.—I know all: you need tell me nothing;—how you refused to serve your own monarch, they say; how you wrote to aid in bribing Sir Thomas Grey; how you have followed the English camp like a raven smelling the carrion of war—all, all—I know all!"

"Then clear up all!" answered Woodville; "and you shall have pardon."

"Pardon!" cried Dyram, with a mocking laugh; and then suddenly turning to Sir Harry Dacre, he went on. "Next, to you I will speak, sir doleful knight, and tell you, that from your fair fame, too, I can clear away the stain that hangs upon it—black and indelible as you think it. I can take out the mark of Cain, and give you back to peace and happiness."

Sir Harry Dacre gazed upon him for a moment in stern silence, and then replied, "I doubt it."

"Doubt not," replied Ned Dyram. "I can do it, I will; but upon my own conditions."

"What may they be?" asked Sir John Grey. "If they be reasonable, such information as you may proffer may be worth its price. But, remember, before you speak, that your neck is in a halter, and that this paper conveys you to the provost, and the provost to the next tree, if your demands be insolent."

"I am not sure of that," replied Ned Dyram, boldly. "Sir John Grey is not King in the camp. What say you, Sir Richard of Woodville, will you grant my conditions, provided that I save you from your peril, and give you the means of proving your innocence within an hour?"

"I must hear them first, knave," replied the young knight; "I will bind myself to nothing, till they are spoken."

"Oh, they are easily said," answered Ned Dyram. "First, I will have twenty miles free space between me and the camp —So much for security. Then I will have your knightly word, that a fair maiden whom you know, named Ella Brune, shall be mine."

"Where is she?" demanded Richard of Woodville. "I know not where she is; I have not seen her for months, nay years."

"Oh, she is not far off when Richard of Woodville is here," said the man, with a sneer. "I know all about it;—ay, Sir John Grey, the smooth-faced clerk, the corrupter of the men of Montl'herry. Can you not produce her?"

"Perhaps I can ere long," replied Sir John Grey. "But what if I do?"

"Why, then," answered Dyram, in the same saucy tone, "before I speak a word, I will have her promise to be mine. She will soon give it, when she knows that on it hangs Richard of Woodville's life. She has taught me herself, how to wring her hard heart."

"She shall give no such promise for me," replied Woodville, sternly. "I tell thee, pitiful scoundrel, that I would rather, with my bosom free of aught like guilt, lay my head upon the block, than force a grateful and high-hearted girl to wed herself to such a vile slave as thou art. If your insinuations should be true, and she has done for me all that you say, full well and generously has she repaid the little I ever did to serve her. She shall do no more, and least of all make her own misery to save my life."

"Then die, sir knight," rejoined Ned Dyram; "for you will find, with all your wit, you cannot struggle through the toils in which you are caught."

"It may be so," said Sir John Grey; "but by my life, bold villain, you shall die too."

"Perhaps so," answered Dyram, with sneering indifference; "but I can die in silence like a wolf."

"As you have lived," added Richard of Woodville; "so be it."

"Stay," said Sir Harry Dacre; "are these the only conditions you have to propose? Will nought else serve your purpose as well? Gold as much as you will."

"Nought, nought," replied Dyram. "You know the terms, and can take or reject them as you think fit. If you like them well, sir knight, and would have your innocence of the crime

laid to you proved beyond all doubt—if you would save your friend too, you have nought to do but seek out this fair maiden. She is not far, I am right sure—and if you but bring her in your hand to me, I will condescend to accept her as my wife, and set you free of all calumny. You struck me once, Richard of Woodville. You cannot expect that I should forget that bitter jest, without a bitter atonement."

"Send him away, Sir John, I do beseech you," cried Woodville, warmly. "My temper will not long hold out; and I shall strike him again."

"Ho, without there!" cried Sir John Grey. "Take this man away, Edmond, and put gyves upon him. Have him watched night and day; for I now know who he is; and a more dangerous knave there does not live. He will escape if Satan's own cunning can effect it."

"Well, you know the terms," said Ned Dyram, turning his head as two of the soldiers drew him away by the arms. "Think better of it, noble knights. Ha, ha, ha! What a story to tell, that the fair fame of Sir Harry Dacre, and the life of Sir Richard of Woodville, both mighty men of war, should depend upon one word of poor Ned Dyram!" and with this scoff he was led away.

Dacre paused in silence, leaning his brow thoughtfully upon his hand; and Richard of Woodville for several moments conversed with Sir John Grey in a low tone.

"Ay, you may well think it strange, Richard," said the elder knight aloud, "that I, who at one time was taught to fancy this girl your paramour, should suddenly place such trust in her, as to let her follow her will in all things, and put means at her disposal to effect whatever she thought fit. But do you see that ring?" and he pointed to a circle of gold set with a large sapphire on his finger; "it is a record, Richard, of a quality, which in her race, though it be a humble one, is hereditary. I mean gratitude. I once rescued from injury the wife of a good soldier, named Brune, the son of one of Northumberland's minstrels. 'Twas but a trifling service which any knight would have rendered to a woman in distress; but that good man, her husband, in gratitude for this simple act, sacrificed his own life to save mine. It was on Shrewsbury field twelve long years ago; and when I left him with the enemy on every side, I gave him that ring, in the hope that he might still escape; but he was already sorely wounded in defending me; and ere he died he sent it as a last gift to his daughter. When I saw it by mere accident, and heard that daughter tell her feelings towards you, I re-

cognised the spirit of her race; and had it cost me half the lands I had just recovered, she should not have wanted means to carry out her plan for serving you. What now?" he continued, turning to one of his attendants, who entered.

"The King, sir knight, desires your presence instantly, to consult with Sir Thomas of Erpingham for the ordering of to-morrow's battle."

"I come," replied Sir John Grey; and then turning to Richard of Woodville, he added, "This is fortunate; perchance what I have to tell him this night, may make him somewhat soften the strictness of his orders." Thus speaking, he withdrew, leaving Richard of Woodville alone with Sir Harry Dacre.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE ORDERING OF THE BATTLE.

We must follow, for a short space, the steps of Sir John Grey, who hurried after the messenger, to the quarters of the King, which lay at about half a mile's distance from his own. As I have shown, he intended to speak with the monarch upon the intelligence regarding the young knight, which he had received that night; but an opportunity for so doing was not so easily found as he had expected.

The moon was shining bright and unclouded; not a vapour was in the sky; and, as he approached the guards, which were stationed round Henry's temporary residence, he could hear the sound of voices, and see distinctly a small party walking slowly up the road. One was half a step in advance of the rest; and there was something in the air and tread which told the knight at once that there was the King. Hurrying after, he soon overtook the group, and joined in their conversation in a low voice: but far more weighty thoughts than the fate of any individual, now occupied all. Their speech was of the morrow's battle, their minds fixed upon that which was to decide the destiny of thrones and empires, —which was to deal life and death to thousands; and Richard of Woodville seemed forgotten by all but Sir John Grey himself.

The King, too, walked on before in silence, with his eyes bent upon the ground, and his look grave and thoughtful; and it was not till, passing out of the village, he came upon

the brow of a small acclivity, from which the whole of the enemy's line of watch-fires could be descried, that he paused or spoke. The moment that he stopped, the distinguished soldiers who followed him gathered round; and, turning towards them with a countenance now all smiles, the monarch said, "Somewhere near this spot must be the place—I marked it this afternoon. Ha! Sir John Grey, I hardly thought you would have time to come."

"A little more in advance, Sire," replied Sir Thomas of Erpingham, answering the former part of the King's speech. "If you take your stand here, the Frenchmen will have space to spread out their men beyond the edge of the two woods; but, if you plant your van within a half-bowshot of the edge of those trees, they must coop themselves up in the narrow space, where their numbers will be little good."

"You are right, renowned knight," said the King, laying his hand familiarly upon Erpingham's shoulder. "I did not mean just here. The standard shall be pitched where yon low tree rises; the vanward a hundred paces farther down, the rearward where we now stand."

"Does your Grace mark that meadow there, upon the right?" asked Sir John Grey; "close upon the edge of the wood."

"I do, good friend," answered Henry; "and will use it as I know you would have. But, go down first, and see how it is defended; for we must not expose our foot-men to the French horse."

Sir John Grey and the Earl of Suffolk hurried on, while Henry examined the rest of the field; but they soon returned with information that the meadow was defended by a deep and broad ditch, impassable for heavy horses; and Henry replied, "Well, then, we will secure it for ourselves by our good bowmen. Though we be so few, we can spare two hundred archers to gall the Frenchmen's flank as they come up."

"Ay! would to Heaven," cried one of the gentlemen present, "that all the brave men, who are now idle in England, could know that such a field as this lies before their King, and they had time to join us."

"Ha! what is that?" cried Henry. "No, by my life! I would not have one man more. If we lose the day, which God forbid we should, we are too many already; and if we win this battle, as I trust in Heaven we shall, I would not share the glory of the field with any more than needful. Come, my good lords and noble knights, let us go on and

view the ground farther, and when all is decided we will place guards and light fires to insure that the enemy be not beforehand with us." Thus saying, he walked on, conversing principally with Sir Thomas of Erpingham upon the array of his men; while the other gentlemen followed talking together, or listening to the consultation between the King and his old and experienced knight. As they went on, various broken sentences were thus overheard—as, "Ay, that copse of brushwood will guard our left right well—and the hedges and ditches on the right, will secure us from the charge of men-at-arms. Their bowmen we need not fear, my Liege."

"I have bethought me, my old friend, of a defence, too, for our archers in the front. We have all heard how at Bannockburn, in the time of good King Edward, pitfalls were dug to break the charging horse. We have no time for that; but I think, if we should plant before our archers, long stakes pointed with iron, a little leaning forward towards the foe, the British bows would be secure against the chivalry of France; or, if they were assailed and the enemy did break through, 'twould be in wild disorder and rash disarray, as was the case at Cressy."

"A marvellous good thought, my Liege; but every battle has a change. Those who were once attacked, become the attackers, and should such be our case, how will you clear the way for our own men from the stakes that were planted against the enemy?"

"That must be provided against, Sir Thomas. Each man must pull up the stake near him."

"Nay, my Liege," said Sir John Grey, joining in. "Let a hundred billmen be ranged with the second line of archers; and, at a word given, pass through and root up the stakes."

"Right, right, Sir John," answered the King. "Then the fury of our charge, when charge we may, will not be checked by our own defences. Our van must be all archers, with the exception of the brown bills—and I think to give the command——"

"I do beseech you, my lord the King," said the Duke of York, advancing from behind, "to let me have that post, and lead the van of your battle. Words have been spoken, and rumours have been spread, which make me eager for a place of danger. You must not refuse me, royal prince."

"Nor will I, cousin," answered Henry. "On your honour and good faith, I have as much reliance, as on your skill and courage, which no man dares to doubt. Are you not a Plantagenet?"

The Duke caught his hand and kissed it; and if he had taken any share, as some suspected, in the conspiracy of Southampton, he expiated his fault on the succeeding day, by glorious actions and a hero's death.

"Now," said the King, after some further examination of the field, "you understand our disposition, noble knights; and to you I entrust it to secure the ground during the night, and to make the arrangements for to-morrow. Cousin of York, you lead the van. I myself, with my young brother, Humphrey of Gloucester, will command the main battle. Oxford and Suffolk, you and the Lord Marshal shall give us counsel. My uncle of Exeter shall lead our rearward line, and this good knight of Erpingham shall be our marshal of the field. Let all men in the centre fight on foot: and let the cavalry be ranged on either wing to improve the victory I hope to win. When all is ready, back to your beds and sleep, first praying God for good success to-morrow. Then, in the morning early, feed your men. Let them consume whatever meat is left; for if we gain the day, they shall find plenty on before; and if we lose it, few methinks will want provisions."

Thus saying, the King turned and walked back towards the village; and Sir John Grey choosing that moment, advanced and addressed him in a low tone in regard to Richard of Woodville. Henry soon stopped him, however—"We cannot speak on that to-night, my noble friend," he said. "It grieves me much, I own, to debar a gallant gentleman from sharing in a field like this. I know that it will grieve him more than death; but yet—Nay, no more. We will not speak of this. Set watch upon him;—but not too strict. You understand me; and you who taught my infant hands first to draw a bow, shall fight by my side to-morrow. Now, good night—I will tell you my belief; it is, that this youth is guiltless. I do not often rashly judge men's characters; and I formed my estimate of his, long, long ago. Farewell, and God shield us all to-morrow."

Sir John Grey hurried home, and found, that, during his long absence, all in the house where he was quartered, except one or two of his own personal attendants and the necessary guard, had retired to rest. Ere he sought his pillow also, however, he sat down and wrote some hurried lines, which he signed and sealed; and then, with a silent step seeking the chamber where Richard of Woodville slept, with two or three yeomen across the door, he went in, and gazed for a moment at the young knight, as he lay upon his little pallet, with his

arm under his head, and a well-pleased smile upon his slumbering face.

"That is not the sleep of guilt," said Sir John in a low murmur to himself. "There, that gives him my Mary, if I fall to-morrow;" and thus saying, he laid the paper he had written upon Woodville's bosom, and retired to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE BATTLE.

The morning of the twenty-fifth of October, St. Crispin's day, dawned bright, but not altogether clear. There was a slight hazy mist in the air, sufficient to soften the distant objects; but neither to prevent the eye from ranging to a great distance, nor the sun, which was shining warm above, from pouring his beams through the air, and tinging the whole vapour with a golden hue. Early in the morning, both armies were on foot; but more bustle and eagerness were observable in the French camp, than amongst the English, who showed a calmer and less excited spirit, weighing well the hazards of the day, and though little doubting of victory, still feeling that no light and joyful task lay before them.

The French, however, were all bustle and activity. Men-at-arms were seen hurrying from place to place, gathering around their innumerable banners, ranging themselves under their various leaders, or kneeling and taking vows to do this or that, of which inexorable fate forbade, in most cases, the accomplishment. Nothing was heard on any side but accents of triumph and satisfaction, prognostications of a speedy and almost bloodless victory over an enemy, to whom they were superior by at least six times the number of the whole English host,—and bloody resolutions of avenging the invasion of France, and the capture of Harfleur, by putting to death all prisoners except the King and other princes, from whom large ransoms might be expected; for a vain people is almost always a sanguinary one. A proud nation can better afford to forgive. Nothing was heard, I have said, but such foolish boastings, and idle resolutions: but I ought to have excepted some less jocund observations, which were made here and there in a low tone, amongst the older, but not wiser of the French

nobility, prompted by the superstitious spirit of the times, which was apt to draw auguries from very trifling indications.

"Heard you how the music of these islanders made the whole air ring throughout the night?" said one.

"And ours was quite silent," said another.

"We have no instruments," rejoined a third. "This King of theirs is fond of such toys, and plays himself like a minstrel, I am told: but I remarked a thing which is more serious; their horses neighed all night, as if eager for a course, and ours uttered not a sound."

"That looks bad, indeed," observed one of the others.

"Perhaps their horses, as well as their men, are frightened," answered another.

"I have seen no sign of fear," replied one of the first speakers, with a shake of the head.

"Why the rumour goes," said the first, "that Henry of England sent on Wednesday, to announce that he would give up Harfleur, and pay for all the damage he has done, if we would but grant him a free passage to his town of Calais."

"It is false," replied the first speaker. "I asked the Constable last night myself, and he said that there is not a word of truth in the whole tale, and that Henry will fight like a boar at bay: so every Frenchman must do his devoir; for if, with six times his numbers, we let the Englishmen win the day, it must be by our folly or our own fault."

As he spoke, the Constable D'Albret, followed by a gallant train of knights and noblemen, rode past on a splendid charger, horse and man completely armed; and, turning his head as he passed each group, he shouted, "To the standard, to the standard, gentlemen! Under your banners, men of France! You will want shade, for the sun shines, and we have a hot day before us."

Thus saying, he rode on, and the French lines were speedily formed in three divisions, like the English. The first, or vanguard, comprised eight thousand men-at-arms, all knights or squires, four thousand archers, and fifteen hundred cross-bowmen, and was led by the Constable, the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, with some twenty other high lords of France, while upon either wing appeared a large body of chosen cavalry. The whole line was glittering with gilded armour, and gay with a thousand banners of embroidered arms; and, as the sun shone upon it, no courtly pageant was ever more bright and beautiful to see.

The main body consisted of a still larger force, under the Dukes of Bar and Alençon, with six counts, each a great

vassal of the crown of France. The rear guard was more numerous still; but in it were comprised the light armed and irregular troops, and a mixed multitude upon whom little dependence could be placed.

When all were arranged in order, on the side of the hill, the Constable addressed the troops, in words of high and manly courage, tinged perhaps with a little bombast; and when he had done, the whole of that vast force remained gazing towards the opposite slope, and expecting every moment to see the English army appear, and endeavour to force its way onward towards Calais. As yet, but a few scattered bodies of the invaders were apparent upon the ground, and some time passed, ere the heads of the different corps were descried issuing forth in perfect order to the sound of martial music, and taking up their position on the field, marked out by Henry during the night before. Their appearance, as compared with that of the French host, was poor and insignificant in the extreme. Traces of travel and of strife were evident in their arms and in their banners; and their numbers seemed but as a handful opposed to the long line which covered the hill before them. Yet there was something in the firm array, the calm and measured step, the triumphant sound of their trumpets and their clarions, the regular lines of their archers and of their cavalry, the want of all haste, confusion, or agitation, apparent through the whole of that small host, which was not without its effect upon their enemies, who began to feel that there would be indeed a battle, fierce, bloody, and determined, before the day, so fondly counted theirs, was really won.

Prompt and well-disciplined, with their bows on their shoulders, their quivers and their swords at their sides, and their heavy axes in their hands, the English archers at once took up the position assigned to them, with as much precision as if at some pageant or muster. Each instantly planted in the earth a heavy iron-shod stake, which he carried in his left hand, and drove it in with blows from the back of his axe; and then each strung his bow, and drew an arrow from the quiver. Behind, at a short distance, came the battle of the King, consisting of heavy armed infantry, principally billmen, with a strong force of cavalry on either hand. The rearward, under the Duke of Exeter, appeared shortly after on the hill above; and each of the two last divisions occupied its appointed ground with the same regularity and tranquil order which had been displayed by the van.

The preparations which they perceived, the pitching of the

stakes, the marshalling of the English forces, and the position which they had taken up, showed the French commanders that the King of England was determined his battle should be a defensive one; and the appearance of some bodies of the enemy in the neighbourhood of the village of Agincourt, with the burning of a mill and house upon the same side, led them to believe that some stratagem was meditated, which must be met by prompt action with the principal corps of Henry's army.

That there were difficulties in attacking a veteran force in such a position, the Constable D'Albret clearly saw, but he was naturally of a bold and rash disposition; his enemies of the Burgundian party had more than once accused him of his irresolution and incapacity; and he resolved that no obstacle should daunt, or induce him to avoid a battle, with such an overpowering force at his command. He gave the order then to move forward at a slow pace, and probably did not perceive the full perils of his undertaking, till his troops had advanced too far, between the two woods, to retreat with either honour or safety. When he discovered this, it would seem an order was given to halt, and for some minutes the two armies paused, observing each other, the English determined not to quit their ground, the French hesitating to attack.

A solemn silence pervaded the whole field; but then Henry himself appeared, armed from head to foot in gilded armour, a royal crown encircling his helmet, covered with precious stones, and his beaver up, displaying his countenance to his own troops. Mounted on a magnificent white horse, he rode along the line of archers in the van, within half a bow shot of the enemy, exhorting the brave yeomen, in loud tones, and with a cheerful face, to do their duty to their country and their King. Every motive was held out that could induce his soldiery to do gallant deeds; and he ended by exclaiming, "For my part, I swear that England shall never pay ransom for my person, nor France triumph over me in life; for this day shall either be famous for my death, or in it I will win honour and obtain renown."

Along the second and third line he likewise rode, followed close by Sir Thomas of Erpingham, with his bald head bare, and the white hair upon his temples streaming in the wind; and to each division the King addressed nearly the same words. The only answer that was made by the soldiers was, "On, on! let us forward!" and the only communication which took place between the King and his marshal of the host occurred when at length Henry resumed his position in the centre of the main battle.

"They are near enough, my Liege," said the old knight. "Is your Grace ready?"

"Quite," replied Henry. "Have you left a guard over the baggage?"

"As many as could be spared, Sire," replied the Marshal. "Shall we begin?"

Henry bowed his head; and the old knight, setting spurs to his horse, galloped along the face of the three lines, waving his truncheon in his hand, and exclaiming, "Ready, ready! Now, men of England, now!"

Then, in the very centre of the van, he stopped by the side of the Duke of York, dismounted from his horse, put on his casque, which a page held ready; and then, hurling his leading staff high into the air, as he glanced over the archers with a look of fire untamed by age, he cried aloud, "Now strike!"

Each English yeoman suddenly bent down upon his knee and kissed the ground. Then starting up, they gave one loud, universal cheer, at which, to use the terms of the French historian, "the Frenchmen were greatly astounded." Each archer took a step forward, drew his bow-string to his ear; and, as the van of the enemy began to move on, a cloud of arrows fell amongst them, not only from the front, but from the meadow on their flank, piercing through armour, driving the horses mad with pain, and spreading confusion and disarray amidst the immense multitude which, crowded into that narrow field, could only advance in lines thirty deep.

"Forward, forward!" shouted the French knights.

"On, for your country and your King!" cried the Constable D'Albret; but his archers and cross-bowmen would not move; and, plunging their horses through them, the French men-at-arms spurred on in terrible disarray, while still amongst them fell that terrible shower of arrows, seeming to seek out with unerring aim every weak point of their armour, piercing their visors, entering between the gorget and the breast-plate, transfixing the hand to the lance. Of eight hundred chosen men-at-arms, if we may believe the accounts of the French themselves, not more than a hundred and forty could reach the stakes by which the archers stood. This new impediment produced still more confusion: many of the heavy-armed horses of the French goring themselves upon the iron pikes, and one of the leaders, who cast himself gallantly forward before the rest, being instantly pulled from his horse, and slain by the axes of the English infantry; whilst still against those that were following were aimed the deadly shafts, till, seized with terror, they drew the bridle and fled, tearing their

way through the mingled mass behind them, and increasing the consternation and confusion which already reigned.

At the same moment, the arrows of the English archers being expended, the stakes were drawn up; and encouraged by the evident discomfiture of the French van, the first line of the English host rushed upon the struggling crowd before them, sword in hand, rendering the disarray and panic irremediable, slaughtering immense numbers with their swords and axes, and changing terror into precipitate flight.

Up to this period, Henry, surrounded by some of his principal knights, stood immoveable upon the slope of the hill, but seeing his archers engaged hand to hand with the enemy, he pointed out with his truncheon a knight in black armour with lines of gold, about a hundred yards distant upon his left, saying, "Tell Sir Henry Dacre to move down with his company to support the van. The enemy may rally yet." A squire galloped off to bear the order; and instantly the band to which he addressed himself swept down in firm array, while the King, with the whole of the main body, moved slowly on to insure the victory.

No further resistance, indeed, was made by the advanced guard of the French. Happy was the man who could save himself by flight; the archers and the cross-bowmen, separating from each other, plunged into the wood; many of the men-at-arms dismounting from their horses, and casting off their heavy armour, followed their example; and others, flying in small parties, rallied upon the immense body led by the Dukes of Bar and Alençon, which was now advancing, in the hope of retrieving the day. It was known that the Duke of Alençon had sworn to take the King of England, alive or dead, and the contest now became more fierce and more regular. Pouring on in thunder upon the English line, the French men-at-arms seemed to bear all before them; but though shaken by the charge, the English cavalry gallantly maintained their ground; and, as calm as if sitting at the council-table, the English King, from the midst of the battle, even where it was fiercest around him, issued his commands, rallied his men, and marked with an approving eye, and often with words of high commendation, the conduct of the foremost in the fight.

"Wheel your men, Sir John Grey," he cried, "and take that party in the green upon the flank. Bravely done, upon my life; Sir Harry Dacre seems resolved to outdo us all. Give him support, my Lord of Hungerford. See you not that he is surrounded by a score of lances! By the holy rood, he has cleared the way. Aid him, aid him, and they are routed there!"

"That is not Sir Harry Dacre, my Lord the King," said a gentleman near. "He is in plain steel armour. I spoke with him but a minute ago."

"On, on," cried Henry, little heeding him. "Restore the array on the right, Sir Hugh Basset. They have bent back a little. On your guard, on your guard, knights and gentlemen! Down with your lances. Here they come!" and at the same moment, a large body of French, at the full gallop, dashed towards the spot where the King stood. In an instant, the Duke of Gloucester, but a few yards from the monarch, was encountered by a knight of great height and strength, and cast headlong to the ground. Henry spurred up to his brother's defence, and covering him with his shield, rained a thousand blows, with his large, heavy sword, upon the armour of his adversary, while two of the Duke's squires drew the young Prince from beneath his horse.

"Beware, beware, my Lord the King!" cried a voice upon his left; and turning round, Henry beheld the knight in the black armour, pointing with his mace to the right, where the Duke of Alençon, some fifty yards before a large party of the French chivalry, was galloping forward, with his battle-axe in his hand, direct towards the King. Henry turned to meet him; but that movement had nearly proved fatal to the English monarch; for as he wheeled his horse, he saw the black knight cover him with his shield, receive upon it a tremendous blow from the gigantic adversary who had overthrown the Duke of Gloucester, and, swinging high his mace, strike the other on the crest a stroke that brought his head to his horse's neck. A second dashed him to the ground; but Henry had time to remark no more, for Alençon was already upon him, and he had now to fight hand to hand for life. Few men, however, could stand before the English monarch's arm; and in an instant, the Duke was rolling in the dust. A dozen of the foot soldiers were upon him at once.

"Spare him, spare him!" cried the King; but, ere his voice could be heard, a dagger was in the unhappy prince's throat.

When Henry looked round, the main body of the French were flying in confusion, the rear guard had already fled; and all that remained upon the field of Agincourt of the magnificent host of France, were the prisoners, the dying, or the dead, except where here and there, scattered over the ground, were seen small parties of twenty or thirty, separated from the rest, and fighting with the courage of despair.

"Let all men be taken to mercy," cried the King, "who are willing to surrender. Quick, send messengers, uncle of Exeter, to command them to give quarter."

"My Lord the King! my Lord the King!" cried the voice of a man, galloping up in haste, "the rear-guard of the enemy have rallied, and are already in your camp, pillaging and slaying wherever they come."

"Ha, then, we will fight them too," cried the monarch. "Keep the field, my Lord Duke, and prevent those fugitives from collecting together;" and gathering a small force of cavalry, Henry himself rode back at speed towards the village of Maisoncelles. But when he reached the part of the camp where his baggage had been left, the King found that the report of the French rear-guard having rallied, was false. Tents had been overthrown, it is true, houses had been burnt, wagons had been pillaged; and the work of plunder was still going on. But the only force in presence consisted of some six or seven hundred armed peasantry, headed by about six score men-at-arms, with three or four gentlemen apparently of knightly rank. The cavaliers, who had dismounted, instantly sprang on their horses and fled when the English horse appeared; and Henry, fearing to endanger his victory, shouted loudly not to pursue.

"I beseech you, my Liege, let me bring you back one of them," cried the knight in the black armour, who was on the King's left; and ere Henry could reply, digging his spurs deep into his horse's sides, he was half a bow-shot away after the fugitives. They fled fast, but not so fast as he followed.

"We must give him aid, or he is lost," cried the King, riding after; but ere he could come up, the knight had nearly reached the three hindmost horsemen, shouting loudly to them to turn and fight.

Two did so; but hand to hand he met them both, stunned the horse of one by a blow upon the head, and then turning upon the other, exclaimed, "We have met at length, craven and scoundrel! We have met at length!"

The other replied not, but by a thrust of his sword at the good knight's visor. It was well aimed; and the point passed through the bars and entered his cheek. At the same moment, however, the black knight's heavy mace descended upon his foeman's head, the crest was crushed, the thick steel gave way, and down his enemy rolled—hung for a moment in the stirrup—and then fell headlong on the ground.

Light as air, the victor sprang from his saddle, and setting his foot upon his adversary's neck, gazed fiercely upon him as he lay. There were some few words enamelled above the visor; and crying aloud, "Ave, Maria!" the black knight shook his mace high in the air, then dropped it by the thong.

without striking, and, unclasping his own helmet, as the King came up, exposed the head of Richard of Woodville.

Such was the last deed of the battle of Agincourt.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CONCLUSION.

In the same large and magnificent hall of the royal castle at Calais, in which Edward III. entertained his prisoners after his chivalrous, though imprudent combat with the French forces under the walls of that town, was assembled the Court of England on the arrival of his great descendant, Henry V., some days subsequent to the battle of Agincourt. The scene was a splendid one; for, though the monarch and many of his nobility had to mourn the loss of near and dear relatives in that glorious field, no time had yet been been given to prepare the external signs of grief; and the habiliments of all were, either the gay robes of peace and rejoicing, or the still more splendid panoply of war. As may be naturally supposed, the greater number of those present were men; but, nevertheless, the circle round the King's person contained several of the other sex; for, besides the wife and daughters of the Governor of Calais, and the ladies of several of the principal officers and citizens of the town, a number of the female relations of the conquerors of Agincourt, who had come over to the English city, on the first news of the army's march from Harfleur, were likewise in the hall.

No pageant or revel, however, was going forward; and, although Henry could not but feel the vast importance of the deed that he had achieved, and the great results which might be expected to ensue, both in strengthening his power at home, and extending it abroad, yet his countenance was far more grave and thoughtful than it had been before the battle; and rejoicing, as was natural, at such vast success, he rejoiced with moderation, and repressed every expression of triumph.

After speaking for some time with the persons round him, he turned to Sir John Grey, who stood at a short distance on his left hand; and noticing with a kindly smile the knight's fair daughter, he said, "Now, my noble friend, you besought me this morning to hear what you had to bring before me,

concerning Sir Richard of Woodville. Ere I listen to a word, however, let me at once say, that the good service rendered by that knight upon the field of Agincourt wipes out whatever offence he may have before committed; and without prayer or solicitation, I free him from all bonds, and pardon everything that may be passed."

As he spoke, Richard of Woodville advanced from behind, and standing before the King, exclaimed, "I beseech you, Sire, to withdraw that pardon, and to judge me as if I had never drawn sword or couched lance in your service. If I am guilty, my guilt is but increased by having dared to break ward, and fight amidst honest Englishmen; and I claim no merit for what little I have done, except in having brought to your Majesty's feet the traitor scoundrel, Simeon of Roydon, who doubtless, with his own lips, will now confess his treason towards you, his falsehood towards me."

"If he do not," said Sir John Grey, boldly, "I have, thank God, ample means to prove it. Let him be called, my Liege, and with him a certain knave, a prisoner likewise in my hands, named Edward Dyram."

"Ha!" cried the King, with a smile—"has our old friend Ned Dyram, too, a share in this affair? I had thought the warning I once gave might have taught him to mend his manners."

"They are past mending, my Liege," answered Sir John Grey. "The villain will doubtless deny all, for he is a hardened knave as ever lived; but we can convict him notwithstanding."

"Well, call them in," answered Henry, "and have all things ready." And while Sir John Grey and Sir William Philip, the King's treasurer, quitted the circle for a moment, Henry turned to Mary Grey, and addressed her in a low tone, with a smiling countenance. The crowd drew back to let the King speak at ease; and the only words that made themselves heard were, "Methinks, fair lady, you have some interest in this affair?"

"Deep, my Liege," replied Mary Grey, with a glowing cheek.

What the King answered was not distinct to those around; but the lady raised her bright eyes to his face, replying eagerly, "More for his honour than for his life, Sire."

No time was lost, for Sir John Grey, expecting a speedy hearing, had prepared all; and in less than five minutes he re-entered the hall, followed by a number of persons, some of whom accompanied him to the end of the chamber where the King was placed, and ranged themselves behind the circle,

while the rest, consisting of prisoners and those who guarded them, remained near the door by which they entered.

Henry fixed his eyes upon the group there standing, and seemed to examine them attentively for a moment in silence, then raising his voice, he exclaimed, "Bring forward Simeon of Roydon, and Edward Dyram."

The two whom he called immediately advanced, with a man-at-arms on either side. The knight held down his head and gazed upon the ground; but the servant looked carelessly around, showing neither fear nor doubt.

"Sir Simeon of Roydon," said the King, in a stern tone, as soon as the culprit stood within a few yards of his person, "You have been taken in arms against your country, and it were wise in you to make free confession of your acts. I exhort you so to do, not promising you aught, but for the relief of your own soul."

The knight paused for an instant, looked to Dyram, and then to Richard of Woodville, and replied, "I have nought to confess, Sire. Unjustly banished from my country, I had no right to regard myself as an Englishman; but it was not against you, my Liege, that I bore arms. It was against my enemy, who stands there. Him I sought, knowing him to be in your camp."

"A poor excuse," replied the King; "and you must have had speedy intelligence, since he arrived there but the night before; and you, fellow," continued Henry, turning to Dyram, "What know you of this knight, and his proceedings?"

"Very little, may it please your Grace," replied Ned Dyram; "I have seen him before, I think; but where it was, I cannot justly say."

"May I ask one question of the guard, my Liege?" demanded Sir John Grey. Henry inclined his head; and the knight proceeded—"Have these two men held any communication together in the anteroom?"

"They spoke together for a few moments in a strange tongue," answered the man-at-arms whom he addressed; "and when we parted them, they still talked from time to time across the room."

"Well," replied the old knight, "it will serve them but little. Have you the papers, Sir William Philip?"

"They are here," said the treasurer; and he placed a roll in the King's hand.

Henry looked at the first paper casually, saying, "This I know;" but regarded the second more attentively, and, after reading it through, turned to Sir John Grey, and inquired,

"What is this? I see it refers to the man before us. But how was it obtained?"

"It is referred to, my Liege, in the question, number four, which your Grace permitted me to draw up. You will find them further on. The two following letters I need not explain. The only question is, as to their authenticity, which can be proved."

The King read them all through with care; and then taking a paper from the bottom of the roll, which appeared to contain a long list of interrogatories, numbered separately, and written in a good clerkly hand, he perused it from the beginning to the end. After having read it, he turned to Sir Simeon of Roydon, saying, "You are here charged with grave offences, sir, besides the crime in which you were taken. It is stated here, that you purchased the arms of Sir Richard of Woodville, when they were sold in Ghent, on his men leaving the service of Burgundy to return to England; and that you took his name while following our army up the Somme, and attacking our straggling parties with a leader of free companions, named Robinet de Bournonville. Is it so, or is it not so?"

"This can be proved, my Liege," said Richard of Woodville; "for Sir Philip Beauchamp here present, saw the arms in which this caitiff was taken; and he can swear that they were a gift from himself to me."

"I acknowledge, Sire, that I did purchase them," replied Simeon of Roydon; "and what my companions may have called me, I know not; but if perchance they called me Woodville, it was in jest; but no man can say that I was seen following your army from Harfleur hither."

"It is enough, it is enough," said the King. "Of this charge, Richard, you are free," he continued, turning to Woodville; and then resuming his interrogatories, he went on to ask, "Did you, or did you not, Sir Simeon of Roydon, intercept a letter from me to this good knight, and counterfeiting his signature, write a reply, refusing to obey my commands?"

Sir Simeon of Roydon started, and turned a fierce look upon Ned Dyram, as if he suspected that he had been betrayed; but the surprise which he saw in the man's face, notwithstanding a strong effort to repress it, convinced him that Henry had other sources of information; but resolute in his course to the last, he replied in a bold tone, "It is false. Who is my accuser?"

The King looked round; and a sweet musical voice replied, "I am!"

"Stand forward, stand forward," said the King. "Ha! who are you? I have seen that fair face before."

" Once, my Liege," said Ella Brune, advancing, dressed in the garments she had worn immediately after her grandsire's death, " and then your Grace did as you always do, rendered justice both to the offender and the offended. I accuse this man of having done the deed that you have mentioned, and many another blacker still. I accuse him of having made use of him who stands beside him, Edward Dyram—pretending to be a servant of Sir Richard of Woodville, long after he had been driven in disgrace from his train—to obtain from the messenger of the Count of Charolois the letter which your Grace had sent. Speak," she continued, turning to Dyram, " Is it not true?"

The man hesitated, and turned red and white, but was silent.

" Speak," reiterated Ella Brune, " it is your last chance. Then read this letter, my Liege," she continued, " from the noble Count of Charolois, wherein he states, that he has traced out this foul and wicked plot, and——"

" I will confess I *did*," exclaimed Dyram; " I did get the letter. I did aid to forge the answer; but he, he—Richard of Woodville—struck me, and I vowed revenge."

" What more?" demanded the King, sternly. " If you hope for life speak truth. *You* have not defiled knightly rank; *you* have not degraded noble birth; *you* have not violated all that should keep men honest and true. There is some hope for you."

" Ha, knave!" exclaimed Simeon of Roydon, gazing at him fiercely; but Dyram hesitated and paused without reply; and Ella Brune proceeded, pointing with her fair hand to the papers which the King held open before him, and demanding, while her dark eyes fixed stern on Dyram's face, " And the letter from the prisoner of Montl'herry, to Sir John Grey, did you not erase the words with which it ended—they were, if I remember right, ' touching my ransom,'—and change the Christian name in the superscription?"

" No, no," cried the man vehemently, knowing that the charge might well affect his life. No, I did not—nobody saw me do it; I say I did not."

" Fool!" cried Ella Brune, after giving him a moment to consider; " Your hate has been dangerous to others, your love has been dangerous to yourself—Give me that cup! My Lord the King, may I crave to see the letter I have named?"

Henry took it from the rest, and placed it in her hand; and, dipping her finger in a cup containing a clear white fluid, which the page of Sir John Grey brought forward, she ran it over the line immediately preceding Richard of Wood-

ville's signature. The King gazed earnestly on the parchment as she did so, and, to his surprise, he beheld the words she had mentioned reappear—somewhat faint and indistinct, it is true, but legible enough to show that the meaning of the whole paper had been falsified by their erasure.

"That wretched man," said Ella Brune, pointing to Dyram, "in a foolish fit of tenderness towards my poor self, taught me the art of restoring writings long effaced; and now, by his own skill, I show you his own knavery."

Henry turned round with a generous smile of sincere pleasure towards Richard of Woodville, saying, "I was sure I was not mistaken, Richard;" and he held out his hand.

The young knight took it, and pressed his lips upon it, replying, "You seldom are, Sire; but there is more to come, or I am mistaken."

"Nay, with him I have done," said Ella Brune, looking at Dyram: "unless he thinks, by free confession of the whole, and telling how a greater knave than himself led him on from fault to fault, to merit forgiveness, the matter affecting him is closed."

"It is vain to conceal it," cried Dyram; "not that I hope for grace, for that is past; but there will be some satisfaction in punishing him who was never grateful for any service rendered him."

"It was yourself you served, villain, and your own passions —not me!" cried Simeon of Roydon, with his eyes flashing fire.

"And how did you treat me?" cried Dyram. "It is true, my Liege, to gain this girl—devil incarnate as she seems to be!—I would have sacrificed aught on earth; and when, after laying a plot with this man to win her—which, by his knavery, had well nigh ended in her ruin—I confessed my fault to yonder knight, and he spurned me like a dog, I would have done as much to take vengeance upon him. I found a ready aid in good Sir Simeon of Roydon, who loved him as dearly as I did. In turns we planned and executed. He devised the letter touching the ransom; he prompted the Duke of Orleans and the Count of Armagnac: I erased the writing, and changed the superscription. Then, again, I hinted that in the armour he had bought, and under the name of its first owner, he might follow your camp, and clench the suspicion of Sir Richard's treason, by proofs that would seem indubitable; never doubting, indeed, that our enemy would be kept long in Montl'herry, but little caring whether the sword fell on the one knight or the other. To make all sure, however, I was

sent to Montl'herry; but I arrived too late to prevent the prisoner's escape; and only discovered by whose assistance it was effected—by that fair maiden there, now clerk and now demoiselle. My story is told, and I have nought to plead. We are both guilty alike; we both loved, and we both hated: but I would not have willingly injured her, who has now destroyed me. In that, and that only, am I better than this noble knight."

"Have you aught more to say, fair maiden, concerning Sir Simeon of Roydon?" asked Henry; "if not, I will at once deal with both of them as they merit."

"Nay, I beseech you, Sire," exclaimed Richard of Woodville, "before you act in any way, listen to me for one moment."

"Speak—speak, my good friend," replied Henry; "I am always willing to hear anything in reason—what would you say?"

"I know not whether your Grace would wish it spoken aloud," said Woodville; "it refers to a time before your accession to the throne."

"Oh yes! speak, speak!" cried Henry; "I have not forgotten Hal of Hadnock. What of those days?"

"Why, Sire, you may remember," answered Woodville, "that, as that noble gentleman you have just named and I rode by the stream near Dunbury, one night in the spring of the year, we found the body of my poor cousin Kate drowned in the water. The man before you thought fit to cast foul doubts on as true and gallant a gentleman as ever lived, Sir Henry Dacre. He now lies at the point of death from wounds received near Agincourt, and if aught on earth can save him, it will be to know that his good name is cleared from all suspicion. If this man could but be brought to speak, and to acknowledge that the charges he insinuated were false, it would be balm to a bruised heart."

"Nay," cried the King, "his falsehood is so evident, his knavery so great, that charges from his mouth are now but empty air. Yet I have heard how Sir Harry Dacre has suffered the bare doubt to prey like a canker upon his peace. Speak, Simeon of Roydon; and, if it be your last word, speak truth. Know you aught of Catherine Beauchamp's death?—and, if you do, whose was the hand that did that horrid deed?"

"Sir Harry Dacre's," answered Roydon, with a malignant smile; for he thought to triumph even in death. "No one doubts it, I believe. Does your Grace?"

"Ay, that I do," answered Henry; "and I have good cause to doubt it. That man was sent by me to make inquiries," and he pointed to Dyram; "and everything that he discovered, I pray you mark, gentlemen all, tended to show that it was impossible Sir Henry Dacre could have done the deed. I have often fancied, indeed, that the knave had learned more than he divulged to me. Is it so, sir? I remember your ways in times of old, that you would tell part, and keep back part. Did you learn aught else?"

"Oh, no, Sire," replied Dyram, with a laugh, glancing his keen eyes towards Richard of Woodville; "I know nought; but I suppose that Sir Henry Dacre did it."

"My Lord the King," said Ella Brune, who had remained silent, with her dark eyes cast down, while this conversation took place, "I can give your Grace the information that you seek to have."

"Ha!—you!" cried Roydon, gazing at her with glaring eyes. "This is all pure hate. Mark, if she do not say I did it!"

"You did!" answered Ella, fixing her eyes upon him. "Do you remember the night after the Glutton mass?—I was there! Do you remember hiding beneath the willows on the abbey side of the stream?—I was there! Do you remember the lady coming and asking for the information you had promised to give, and your assailing her with words of love, and seeking to win her from her promised husband?—I was there!"

"False! false! all false!" cried Sir Simeon of Roydon; but his face as he spoke was deadly pale.

"If you saw all, fair maiden," said the King, "why did you not at once denounce the murderer?"

"I saw all but the last act, my Liege," replied Ella Brune. "Having wandered from Southampton with the poor old man, whom that knight afterwards slew, we found kindly entertainment for our music in a cottage at Abbot's Ann. Wearied with the noise and merriment, I went out and sat beneath the trees; I witnessed what I have said; but then, not to be an eavesdropper, I stole away. When I heard of the murder, however, I well knew who had done it—for the lady answered him scornfully—and I should have told the tale at once, but the old man forbade me, showing that we were poor wandering minstrels, and that my story against the noble and the great would not be credited; yet I am certain that his hand did it."

"Out upon it!" cried Roydon; "will a King of England

listen to such an idle tale? will he not drive from his presence, with contempt, a mountebank singer who, without one witness, brings such a charge in pure hate?"

"Not without one witness," answered Ella Brune. "I have one."

"Call him!" said Henry; "if this man can clear himself from the accusation, he shall have pardon for all the rest."

Ella Brune raised her hand and beckoned to some one standing behind the circle, which had drawn somewhat closer round the spot where this scene was going on. Immediately —while Sir John Grey made way—a lady dressed in the habit of a novice, with her face closely covered, advanced between the King and Simeon of Roydon.

"This is my witness," said Ella Brune; and as she spoke, the other withdrew her veil.

Simeon of Roydon started back with a face pale as death, exclaiming, "Catherine!—She is living! she is living!"

"Ay, but not by your will," answered Catherine Beauchamp; "for you have long thought me dead—dead by the act of your own hand. My Lord the King," she continued, "all that this excellent girl has said is true. On a night you well remember, eager to learn from this man who you really were, I sought him by the banks of the stream, where he had promised to wait and tell me that and other matters, as he said, nearly affecting me. It was wrong of me to do so; but I had done much that was wrong ere then, and I had no scruples. He told me who you were; and then, seeing that no great love existed between myself and poor Harry Dacre, he sought to win my wealth, by inducing me to violate the contract with my promised husband and wed him: what put such a vain notion in his mind, I know not; but I laughed and taunted him with bitter scorn; and he then told me that I should be his or die. At first I feared not: but when I found him lift his hand and grasp me by the throat, I screamed aloud for help, and struggled hard. He mastered me, however, in an instant, and plunged me in the stream. As I fell, I vowed that, if Heaven would send me help, I would make a pilgrimage to St. James of Galicia. The waters, however, soon closed above my head, and in the one dreadful moment which I had for thought—as if the past had been cleared up and illumined by a flash of lightning—all the faults and follies of my former life stood out before me distinct and bright, stripped of the vain imaginations with which I had covered them. I rose again for a moment to the air; and then I vowed that, if God spared me, I would pledge myself to the altar,

and renouncing all that ensnared me, live out the rest of time in penitence and prayer. I soon lost all recollection, however, and when first I woke as from sleep, in great feebleness and agony, I found myself in a litter, borne on towards the abbey. Consciousness was speedily gone again: and when next I roused myself from that dull slumber, my good uncle Richard, the abbot, and an old monk of his convent, were the only persons near. As soon as I could speak, I told them of my vows, and engaged them to keep my recovery a profound secret, till I had taken the veil. The deeds that have been done, however, compel me to come forward now, and tell the truth. I have told it simply and without disguise; but yet I would fain plead for this man's life. To him, as well as to others, I have had great faults, and towards none more than poor Sir Harry Dacre. In a month, however, my vows will be taken, and he will be free; but I would fain not cloud the peace with which I renounce the world, by bringing death on my bad cousin's head; and you, Sire, after such a mighty victory, can well afford to pardon."

But Henry waved his hand: "Not a word for him!" he said; "loaded with so many crimes, I give him up to trial; and by the sentence of his judges will I abide. Remove the prisoners, and keep them under safe ward; one word more, fair lady," he continued, as the men-at-arms led Simeon of Roydon and Ned Dyram from the presence, "how has it so fortunately chanced that you are here to-day?"

"I have travelled far, my Liege," replied Catherine Beauchamp, in a gayer tone; "have made my pilgrimage, and passed part of my noviciate in a cell of the order I have chosen near Dijon. Coming back I met with some Canonesses, who were travelling under the escort of some troops of Burgundy, and with them journeyed to Peronne, whence, under the escort of Sir Richard of Woodville, and accompanied by this good maiden, I came hither. I will not waste your time, my Liege, by telling all the adventures that befel me by the way; but I have to ask pardon of my noble cousin Richard, here, for teasing him somewhat in Westminster and Nieuport, and doing him a still worse turn in Ghent by a letter to Sir John Grey. But, good faith, to say the truth, I thought he was a lighter lover than he has proved himself, and now that I know all, I crave his forgiveness heartily."

"You have it, sweet Kate," answered Richard of Woodville; "but you have several things to hear yet," he continued, in his blunt way, "and some perhaps that may not be very palatable to you."

"Nay, I have heard all," answered Catherine Beauchamp; "but I stand no more in the way of that love, which I had long seen turning to another, when I spurned it from me myself. My vows at the altar will remove all obstacles; and I trust that Dacre will see me as a sister and a friend, though it be but to bid me adieu for ever."

"And I, Woodville," said the King, turning to the young knight, "I, too, would ask you pardon, if I had ever truly suspected you. Such, however, is not the case; and there are many here who can testify, that though I was willing that you should be made to prove your innocence, I never doubted that you could do so. For services rendered, however, and high deeds done, as well as in compensation for much that you have suffered, I give you one half of the forfeited estates of the traitor Sir Thomas Grey, to hold for ever of us and of our heirs, on presentation of a mace, such as that which beat down the adversary of my brother Humphrey upon the day of Agincourt. Sir John Grey, my good old friend, I think you, too, have a gift to give. Come, let me see it given;" and leading forward Richard of Woodville, he brought him to the side of Mary Grey. The old knight placed her hand in his, and the King said "Benedicite."

Ella Brune turned away her head. Her cheek glowed; but there were no tears in her eyes; and, ere many months were gone, she was a cloistered nun in the same convent with Catherine Beauchamp.

THE END.

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